

INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS

NABO



NEWS

- **Fee Questionnaire - your input is VITAL**
- **Raft out s'il vous plait - save mooring space**
- **Q & A with BW on moorings price hike**



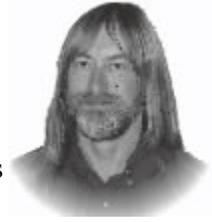
Issue 1 February 2006

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2006 CALENDAR	
Council meeting	Copy date
Mar 11th	Mar 18th
Apr 22nd	Apr 29th
June 3rd	June 10th
July 15th	July 22nd
Sept 16th	Sept 23rd
Nov 18th	AGM
Nov 25th	Dec 7th

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



A somewhat belated 'Happy New Year' to you all. Since I last wrote this column a lot has happened, including two Council members spotting Carole and I on TV defecting from NABO business at the UK Snooker Championships! We then went 'totally offline' for a week over Christmas to recharge in the Scottish Highlands.

I will have to say that I have not found it easy to apply the resultant vigour in a positive way. The pecuniary and heartless attitude of BW has been casting a red haze over all the constructive and cooperative intentions I wanted to re-invent for 2006. I had hoped my first engagement of the year as a guest of the EA for the launch of its Waterway Plans at the Boat Show might ease me in, but no.

The London International Boat Show

The day started off well, including a Thames Clipper high speed catamaran trip from Blackfriars to Canary Wharf as part of the journey down (a luxury I won't bill to NABO!). The tide was ebbing so we shot down the Thames, and, with the benefit of twin screws, a lot of power and skilful handling, we were able to come alongside the piers without turning to face the flow.

The '*Inland Waterways Attraction*' had been banished to the furthest corner of the main hall behind the rigged sails of innumerable dinghies and yachts, well away from the chandlery stands. Plenty of 'white plastic' - some reputed to carry over four tons of fuel but barely enough fresh water for two showers! It is a shame the British Marine Federation, who run the event, couldn't have given inland waterways a better deal.

The EA and BW were sharing a stand which was quite impressive in its way

and demonstrated a welcome spirit of co-operation. This suited me for 'networking' as did the Theakstons in the 'pub', but there was very little else for English canal folk. The stalwarts were promoting the BSS, the IWA had its bookstall, APCO was trying to promote hireboat holidays, but only two firms were showing narrowboats. Not so much vegetation round the exhibits either, has Robin's message got through at last?

The BW London team was promoting the restoration of the East London rivers for the 2012 Olympics and they did make me welcome. I hope I was able to help them with some local knowledge of freight on the Aire and Calder. With that and some useful interchange of ideas with EA, various Thames users and other people of influence, I was beginning to feel I was earning my keep.

We adjourned to a conference room for the Waterway Plans launch where John Edmunds (Navigation 'Champion' on the EA Board) and his team outlined its aspirations. The formal proceedings were concluded by David Suchet, newly elected Chairman of the Thames Alliance, a consortium of parties interested in the river including NABO.

Current Issues

Apart from the ongoing disagreement about licences and moorings with BW, an unwelcome reminder of which was what spoilt my day at the Boat Show, there is trouble brewing on the EA front regarding its Funding strategy.

This could mean two-figure percent rises on fees for several years to come

if EA's estimates of its needs are accurate, but NABO is not convinced that the value of its assets, and the frequency it claims it has to replace them, are right. Unfortunately DEFRA won't grant extra money without extra from boaters, and it is also calling for EA to improve efficiency which it claims can only be achieved by staff reduction. I truly hope the quality time we had on the Thames won't have to be one of those good things that comes to an end.

Another issue of concern is the potential damage being done by an unrepresentative minority (of one?) to BW's plans for freight on the East London Rivers prior to the Olympics. Anyone prepared to defend the 'Regents Network'? Who are they? Anyway, back to licensing...

Blue (Touch) Paper?

– whatever colour follows white - I say blue because it could be even more inflammatory! BW is expected to make further proposals and I think it is essential that we preempt them with a consultation on licensing of our own.

NABO is the only organisation that represents the full spectrum of licence and registration holders and, as such, is in the best position to produce an unbiased survey of boat owners' opinions across the network.

We on Council put in hours of work for you, the least you can do in return, or rather for your own good, is to fill in and return the pull-out questionnaire in this issue, or, easier for us, to use the form on the NABO website. A good response is vital as evidence when the

next round of consultation comes up with BW, and when the EA attempts to harmonise its charging.

Please don't dive in head first, think carefully about every option first, preferably after reading the notes on page 15.

Finally

Current attitudes are making Carole and myself wonder if we want go on '*adding colour, interest and activity to the waterways*' any more and paying ever rising prices for the privilege.

Boats added no colour to the BW Christmas card last year – it had white blobs on a silvery background, vaguely reminiscent of all you can see when facing a blizzard, with the BW logo embossed on a plain white band along the bottom. From where I sat the light made it look totally blank! – the face of contemporary corporate minimalism? The shape of things to come, or already here?

Long gone are the days when the rack and pinion of customer relations was greased by the complimentary BW calendar. At least some attractive waterway scene on the office wall might remind me what all the work should be in aid of, and maybe I would feel just a twinge of guilt looking at a 'freebie' when expressing my current feelings towards BW? No – customer psychology doesn't seem to be anywhere on BW's agenda at present.

Anyway, you get the most from boating and leave the hassle to us – that's what we're paid for, or not!

Stuart Sampson

BW moorings to cost on average 6.7% more -
averaging from around 4 to 5% in the Midlands through nearly 9% in Yorkshire to 12.3% in the Southeast. More on page 8

Have I been in the job too long? Is the magazine is getting stale? Do you like the new cover design for 2006? I'll say designing it has been a welcome relief from chairmanship hassles. and it has certainly been an enjoyable challenge to get all the Council details on the back, but I am still open to offers if anybody wants to take the magazine on on.

As an aside – within the magazine we have to keep an eye on abbreviations, acronyms and inconsistencies in what we call things. We talk of *'the EA'* but never *'the BW'*. An organisation can speak as *'We'*, but should be referred to as *'it'* rather than *'they'*. What a strange material the English language is to work with.

Luckily in print we are immune from pronunciation problems where there even more oddities. There are at least three ways people pronounce 'NABO'. 'Bee-double-yew' is only one syllable shorter than saying the name in full so why bother? Perhaps we should pronounce BW in the Welsh style - 'Boo'. Good thing they abandoned the final 'B'!

SURVEY GOES LIVE

The questionnaire asking boaters to say what they think is the fairest way to charge for navigation opened for input through the NABO website on January 31st. Readers without internet have their chance in this issue.

NABO RESPONDS TO 'WHITE PAPER'

If you have been following the saga of BW's latest attempt to re-assess the licence system you will know that the original proposals, in the so-called 'green paper', have been superseded by a 'white paper'. In this BW seems to have accepted that Continuous Cruisers do not necessarily cause enough wear and tear to merit being charged 147% extra, but all shared ownership boats do.

NABO's official reply to this document is set out on the next pages. Unfortunately we can't print the white paper itself so some of the responses will be out of context unless you have a copy. However we are sure you will get the gist of it.

At the heart of the matter is BW's attempt to bring in factors involving how much you use the network, which at present is seen as an erosion of the basic freedom the licence gives to cruise however much you like without that nagging feeling that you will be charged for it.

Unfortunately BW, or perhaps one staff member in particular, has adopted an entrenched position which has necessitated NABO to challenge almost every aspect of the consultation. The only route that seems available to us to deflect them is to invalidate the process itself. This has placed a lot of strain on those concerned, but we are not going to lie down and be trampled.

NABO response to consultation white paper.

Continuous Cruisers

NABO welcomes BW's recognition that boaters who do not have a mooring do not necessarily cause more wear and tear on canal infrastructure. Accordingly we agree that there is no basis for charging them the '*business*' or higher licence fee.

Classification of bands

As previously stated, but not taken into account through the changes to the 'green paper', NABO does not accept the reclassification of '*Business*' and '*Pleasure*' licence bands to the more generic titles of '*Higher*' and '*Base*'. Under advice, we reserve our position regarding the legal status of this proposal.

We believe that, while BW maintains a two band system with such a high differential, the only class of vessel that should be charged at the higher rate is one whose **purpose** is to enable the licence holder to gain financial reward from persons **other** than those who have contributed financially towards the purchase of that specific vessel, and then only if the profit through that reward is significantly higher than the extra cost of the licence.

'Keeper'

We prefer the term, '*licence holder*'. However we are prepared to acknowledge that the licence holder is not necessarily the legal owner and that, if necessary, the term '*keeper*' could be used instead, to indicate the person who has arranged with BW to license the vessel and whose particulars are registered in connection with it. Beyond that the term has no legal meaning.

Cost Causation

We will **not** accept charges being levied according to 'costs' extrapolated from the 'category' of the user as this can lead to too many injustices, as evidenced by the 'continuous cruiser' example.

Ramsey pricing

We are still not convinced that Ramsey's principles are being applied correctly, specifically as regards flexibility of the market. BW is in the fortunate position that canal vessels are of little use away from the canals and if an owner is no longer prepared to pay, there are few alternatives other than to sell the boat to someone who is prepared to pay, and so BW will continue to receive licence revenue from that vessel. BW should not prejudice the security of funding that brings.

We are however prepared, to accept price discrimination according to vessel length, as boat owners are comfortable with the concept. NABO will also welcome the concept of '*inability to pay*' in BW's future assessments.

Ombudsman Ruling on shared ownership

We interpret the Ombudsman ruling as consistent with the above. Where the White Paper (§2.8) infers that he condoned licence fees to be set according to '*use*' we are prepared to take '*use*' as meaning '*purpose*' and not the measure of time or distance of travel.

We should be grateful if you would forward to us an extract of the Ombudsman's statement agreeing that "USE" should be the basis for future licence arrangements (reference §2.8. your white paper refers), as you appear to be basing this on information not in the public domain.

In the part of his statement to which we are privy, he quotes BW as saying (in §5.2.6):-

"We believe the root of the confusion in this case is due to the fact that in our new licensing structure we now recognise the impracticality of charging the higher fee for informal boat share arrangements. If a group of friends club together and purchase a boat, and nominate one of their members as licence holder, there is no way that British Waterways could know that the boat is in fact shared between several owners. We see no reason why a group like this should pay more than any other Private Pleasure Boat Licence holder. We currently charge more for boats operated by businesses for sound commercial reasons as endorsed by the Framework Document issued by Defra."

We fail to see how this has changed, especially as, from the extract we have, the Ombudsman required BW, not only to resolve the distinction between self and contracted out scheme management, but also to place the complainant on the lower licence rate – indicating his lack of support for increased charges for co-ownership:-

I recommend that BW adjust the charge for the boat to that appropriate to a Private Pleasure Boat Licence prospectively and retrospectively to April 2004, making the necessary refund in respect of the period from April 2004 to the present time.

Discounts

NABO is prepared to accept the discount system as proposed but recommends consultation with the HNBOC and other experts in waterway heritage as to the definition of historic vessels and the obligations of their owners.

NABO is disappointed that loyalty and pensioner discounts are not considered.

Cabinet Office Code of Practice

We have registered our misgivings about the procedures adopted for this consultation in another document at present subject to the BW ICP. We also feel the consultation has not taken proper advantage of the Openness and Accountability criteria currently in force in BW. This too will be detailed in a separate approach.

The Future

NABO will make further investigation into the feelings of boat owners by gauging their reaction to a wide range of alternatives. If this demonstrates a willingness by boat owners to embrace a different basis for navigation fees then we will share the results in any further consultations, which, we trust, would be in **advance** of BW going public.

Why the hike?

BW defends its mooring increases

NABO with the questions – *BW Head of Boating Development with the answers:-*

Q1. Please could you explain why it is necessary for BW to increase its mooring fees by an average well above any price index applicable to the customer e.g. RPI, inflation, or even the composite index BW uses for licence increases.

A1 BW has to operate its moorings business in line with company and competition law and in line with the government's specific remit to BW set out in the Framework Document. These all mean that prices for our long term moorings must reflect local market demand and supply.

Q2. If there are waiting lists, this implies that BW has no vacancies on its moorings. In that case **BW has no capacity to take trade from the private operators.**

A2 The risk of 'taking trade from private operators' is not the main point. Waiting lists signal excess demand, which indicates that the price is below the market clearing rate. An important potential consequence of below market clearing rate prices is a possible impact on investment decisions. Low linear mooring prices have a significant indirect influence on the market for marina moorings. In considering mooring options, a boater will compare prices and service within both sectors. A large differential will result in a larger number of boaters choosing a linear mooring instead of a marina, even if they have to wait for it. Because linear moorings and marina moorings are substitutes - albeit imperfect ones - marina operators are constrained from raising their prices to the level required to provide sufficient return to justify their investment. Please speak with Tim Parker of Black Prince Holidays (bolidays@aol.com), or any other marina operator - if you'd like corroboration of this principle.

An alternative solution is to increase supply but no-one wants more linear moorings so they have to be offline. We are working hard to increase offline capacity by promoting the investment opportunity to developers and lobbying local authorities to improve their understanding of the benefits of marinas to local communities.

Q3 As the 'local authority' for the canal system BW should be taking the opportunity to provide affordable moorings under its social inclusion policies to help those on fixed or RPI indexed incomes, many of whom have contributed greatly to the waterways over the years.

A3 This may be the view of NABO but it is not BW policy for the reasons outlined in A1 and A2.

Q4 We would also like to know why, after BW has mooted the idea of attracting boaters to less used parts of its system, Yorkshire is increasing its fees by 8.7% as opposed to less than 5% for the more congested Midlands areas.

A4 Yorkshires rates were set, like all other regions, using careful analysis of the local market in line with the procedures.

Q5. Mooring fees are a much larger component of boating expenses than licences so to allow such arbitrary fee settings makes a mockery of any proposals for regional licence variations to combat congestion.

A5 These are two separate issues: BW is obliged by competition law to set its mooring prices in the same way as any other mooring operator - if it does not, it risks distorting the market. The licence fee may provide an appropriate alternative tool for meeting other objectives arising from BW's role as navigation authority. It should be clear from previous answers above that to describe Yorkshire pricing as 'arbitrary' is grossly inaccurate.

Q6 Saying that BW has a 'procedure' or 'standard process' does nothing to enhance openness and accountability. Ever since BW abandoned the Mooring Matrix it has failed to justify to its customers the methodology it has put in its place and now would be a good time to do so.

A6 Returning to the old 'matrix' system is not an option, given point 1 above. I'm attaching a copy of the procedures. They are, and indeed have been open to challenge through the O&A process and were upheld by the Ombudsman in a 2002/3 case (see page 5 of the guidelines). BWAf is free to review the strategic issues around our mooring pricing policy if it so chooses.

"I hope this answers your queries and that you will publish this answer in full in your next newsletter"

Done as requested. A copy of the procedures can be downloaded from:-
www.nabo.org/pricingguidelines06.pdf

LAMINATED WINDOW SLOGANS

These are not self adhesive so we can't say they are stickers. They are 5 1/2" x 2 1/2" with the NABO roundel, on the left and the following slogans on the right:-

- 1) Cut Crime - Report it
- 2) Thank you to those who pass us slowly
- 3) This is our home. Please respect our privacy
- 4) Please don't empty your dog here
- 5) Kill wash - Look behind and listen
- 6) Beware - Dogs aboard
- 7) Overstay sanctioned by BW
- 8) Nosey! [in small letters]
- 9) Be heard - be NABO
- 10) NABO puts boats first
- 11) NABO for Navigation
- 12) JOIN US Freepost (BM8367) Birmingham B31 2BR
- 13) Save Red Diesel - Lobby your MP (See page 13)

FOR YOUR SAFETY

AGAINST FIRE



I am sure we have all at one time been brought up short while cruising around the system by the sight of a scorched windowless shell moored out of the way somewhere, or the remains of a blackened cruiser just showing exposed glass matting where its superstructure used to be. That used to be someone's pride and joy, maybe even someone's home. Were they all right? Did a beloved pet die in the fire? How did it start?

Could it happen to me?

Most of the measures required by the Boat Safety Scheme are to minimise that risk, but they only apply to the construction of your boat and may not have been checked within the last four years. They certainly can't prevent human error.

In Warwickshire the county Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) is initiating a Boat Fire Safety Check Scheme. In a press release it said:-



'Boat fires pose particular problems for Fire and Rescue Service personnel. Gaining access to boats is particularly difficult due to the remote location of moorings. More importantly, working in confined spaces in a fire scenario makes search and rescue operations extremely difficult for Firefighters and their exposure to onboard risks such as LPG and petrol poses a serious threat to their health and safety'

'To address this particular area of concern, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS), in partnership with Boat Safety Scheme, has established a Boat Fire Safety Check initiative, similar to their successful Home Fire Safety Check scheme, to deliver key safety information to boat users.

The scheme will form part of a number of preventative measures the Service has already established, to promote fire safety to the communities of Warwickshire, with, in this case, a particular focus on boat safety.

The scheme will be delivered by operational personnel visiting marinas and 'honey pot' sites throughout the County, discussing preventative fire safety measures with boat owners and holiday makers, which will be free of charge.'

It advocates the fitting of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and has been testing various designs in Willow Wren hireboats, but recommends boaters not to wait for the results but get and fit whatever alarms are available now, even if they may be oversensitive to fumes from cooking and cause nuisance. Sensible siting can help.

NABO's Safety Officer, Tony Haynes, commends this initiative highly and hopes the idea will be taken up in other counties. We have invited the WFRS to give a short presentation at our next AGM.

Images courtesy of Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service

AGAINST WEIL'S DISEASE

BW Monthly BW's staff magazine, kindly allowed us to reproduce an article in its safety spread on Leptospirosis:-

In the autumn of 2005 a man in his 40's died and another was very seriously ill after contracting Leptospirosis (or Weil's Disease). Both men lived on their boats. We know that one had fallen in the marina where his boat was moored, and at the time he had an open wound on his knee. These two cases serve as a sharp reminder that although rare, there is a risk that people living and working around untreated waterways could contract Leptospirosis and should be aware of the risk and how to minimise it.

Leptospirosis is transmitted to humans by contact with urine, or water contaminated with urine, from infected rats. There is also a form of the disease which can be transmitted to humans from urine of infected cattle and pigs. The bacteria survive for some time in warm damp conditions away from direct sunlight. They do not survive well in dry conditions and sunlight. The bacteria can enter the body through cuts or scratches to the skin or through the soft tissue in the mouth, throat or nose after contact with infected rat (or cattle) urine or contaminated water.

So it's important that anyone who may come into contact with canal or river water should make sure that any cuts or scratches are covered with a waterproof plaster and that good standards of hygiene are applied. Wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking. Protective clothing should be used where appropriate.

Symptoms start with a flu-like illness, a persistent and severe headache and sickness. In some cases the liver, kidneys, heart and brain linings are affected. Ensure you mention your contact with water to your doctor if you feel unwell, and also ensure that close friends or family are aware of the symptoms.

TREASURER HAS ORDERED ANOTHER CHEQUE BOOK

The recruitment drive for 2006 has got off to a flying start and the Treasurer has already despatched the first few cheques rewarding existing members for enrolling new members. The current going rate is £5 per new member, so if you can introduce three of them (the maximum number the bounty applies to) you effectively receive a free year's subscription.

The new Life Membership category has also attracted its first customers and we anticipate more will follow when they realise that they will no longer be faced with having to remember to renew their subscriptions, or having to amend the amount they pay by standing order every time the rate increases. It should also cut out the need for our hard-working Admin assistant to keep track of those members whose banks are more than generous with their customers' money, and insist on paying us twice a year or even monthly! The Life Membership rate of £150 is a small price to pay for such peace of mind.

KEEPING OUR EYE ON NERC - *Stephen Peters explains*

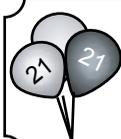
What is NERC? It stands for the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Bill which the Government introduced into the House of Commons in May 2005. It has now progressed to the Upper House and will become an Act of Parliament in Spring 2006.

The main purpose of the legislation is to abolish English Nature and the Countryside Agency and replace them with a new body to be called Natural England. A separate commission will also be established to deal with rural community issues.

Contained within the bill are a number of sundry provisions which have a bearing on inland waterways. The bill proposes to scrap IWAAC (the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council) which is the advisory body established by the Transport Act 1968 and funded by British Waterways. Its current remit officially only extends to BW waterways although this has been somewhat flexibly interpreted as the years have passed. The bill will amend the Transport Act 1968 to constitute a new advisory body to be called IWAC. Spot the difference? One less "A". The word "Amenity" has disappeared. This body will be funded directly by DEFRA and will advise the Minister or Secretary of State or Welsh Assembly on matters affecting all inland waterways in England & Wales. And it will have a similar remit with regard to the Scottish Parliament.

Another part of the bill will give the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads full National Park status, and this could have serious implications for navigation on those extensive tidal river waterways. The likely problem stems from something known as the "Sandford Principle" (named after the noble Lord who first espoused it). This says that if there is a potential conflict between nature conservation and public access - guess which one prevails? The former should be applied to the detriment of the latter. On the Broads this could mean that the freedom to navigate may be curtailed where nature conservation considerations are paramount. The same could also apply to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) which are given additional protection under the bill. If applied sensibly, there is no reason why boating cannot continue within a protected environment but not everyone sees it that way. NABO calls for the right of innocent passage to be permitted along all navigable waterways coupled, if necessary, with sensible safeguards to minimise disruption to natural ecosystems.

Our members may wish to contact their Member of Parliament if they have any strong views on the issues raised by this bill that will return to the Lower House before receiving Royal Assent.



CONGRATULATIONS - The South Pennine Boat Club will be celebrating its 21st Birthday with a rally on the Calder and Hebble at Battyeford on May 5th to 7th -

Details on www.southpennineboatclub.co.uk

RED DIESEL CAMPAIGN

We have to be indebted to Roger Squires of the IWA who has attended a meeting with Revenue, Customs and DTI officials recently and sent NABO a detailed report to tell us what was happening to press the case. To summarise:-

January

UK Government officials went to the European Commission, to identify how best to present the UK case for continuation of derogation, which they would be pressing strongly. Commission officials were receptive, identified what they would expect to see in the Regulatory Impact Assessment [RIA] that the UK Government has to submit, and they have since put those requirements in writing giving one month for completion.

February

Representatives from the British Marine Federation, the Royal Yachting Association, the fuel suppliers and the IWA were called in to discuss the first draft of the RIA, and learn of the various factual 'gaps' that need to be filled by the end of February.

Spring

The EC will then review it and respond in the early Summer. If it is refused, the UK has the right of appeal, which will require further evidence.

The Finance Bill submitted after the Autumn Budget should be considering the legislative requirements if the EC says 'no'. However the EC officials did not see that step as being immediately necessary, which the IWA took as a positive sign.

UK officials are liaising with their counterparts in Ireland, Belgium and Malta, who all have confirmed they also are fighting to retain derogation and they all are sharing their case evidence. Howard Pridding from the BMF has also been canvassing support from those countries.

What now?

The recommendation is to hold off writing to the Government or to MEPs for the next six months. Nothing will be gained by taking any further action now as the officials in the UK are 'on our side' and are working hard to get the best case ready, but have to work within strict guidelines. It is only if we are forced to the appeal stage that there may be a need to call for additional evidence from boaters.

i.e. Hold your horses and cross your fingers!

Metaphorically of course, if we all had horses we wouldn't need diesel, but seriously, NABO has written to John Healey M.P. of the Treasury offering to help 'fill the gaps' and received an appreciative reply. Obviously we will honour that commitment should the offer be accepted.

RCR Advert

FEE SURVEY - YOUR RESPONSE IS VITAL

This is not about mooring fees. It is about licences or river registrations i.e. permits to navigate.

You have elected us to represent your views and we think we have a good idea what they are, but, with all navigation authorities intent on reviewing their charging, we need to be sure. We want to hear from all members so please pull the questionnaire out, fill in your views and send it in an unstamped envelope to:-

Fee Survey, NABO FREEPOST (BM8367), BIRMINGHAM B31 2BR

– **better still, use the Website**

The questionnaire is also on the NABO website. It would save us money and work if you could use that instead if you can. maybe by pencilling in the answers on this form and then going on line when you have thought it through.

General points on filling it in

Don't forget, whichever way you feel is fairest to 'divide the cake', it won't affect the size of the cake, so for everyone who may get off lighter, others will have to pay more.

We have tried to give you a wide range of choices, from the conventional to the absurd, to get you thinking. If we have left some out, let us know in the comments area. One option BW seems to ignore is flat rate charges instead of percentages.

Boxes are provided if you want to suggest an amount for something, e.g. you might think hire craft should pay more but think 50% is fairer than 147%.

Going through the form:-

About you

Your name is not essential but helps us to prevent duplication. However knowing about your boating **is** important so we can see if we are getting a fair cross section and how it affects the answers. We will forgive you for avoiding options that will turn out more expensive for you personally, that is only natural!

Charging questions

All we need to know is what you think is fair. Don't concern yourself at this stage on behalf of the navigation authorities as to how practical your choice is, assume for now, '*where there is a will there is a way*'.

Q4 - Standing charge

Some people would like a go-anywhere ticket, others want to pay less if they choose not to, or cannot, use all the waterways under their authority's control.

The second part asks if you feel the permit fee should also include the right to float your boat on the authority's waters at a mooring. This, we are told, is '*fraught with legal complications*' but we would still like your views.

Q5 - Vessel Attributes

Does size matter? It is generally assumed that permit fees should go up with size like the rest of boating costs, but why should they?

Most of the options are reasonably simple, except maybe the 'square root' one. This would bring the impact of 'area' charging more in line with 'length' charging without ignoring the extra benefits enjoyed by wider beam craft. Generally longer river cruisers and barges are also wider and the result of this formula would be similar to charging by length, making EA's Thames and Anglian charging more equitable. However to account for 'multi-storey' vessels you might decide the 'floor/deck area' option to be fairer.

The engine power option reflects better the damage caused to the banks.

Q6 - Business use

Maybe a bit oversimplified, please use the comments area for any missing options.

Q7 - Shared Ownership

Hot topic at present, much debate about commercial management, definition of sharing, owners, households, friends, formal, etc. Assume that can be sorted and give your 'gut feeling'.

Q8 - Intensity of use

Use more - pay more? IWA says 'no' with valid arguments. More vociferous extended cruising NABO members also say 'no', but this is your chance to say 'yes' if you believe in it. Technology might make fair measurement possible in the future - this questionnaire is about the future. For now NABO is opposing charges predicting 'usage' according to what sort of boater you are, but you don't have to agree with that.

Point for debate:- The present system gives the authorities a secure and predictable source of revenue. If they had to encourage usage to secure funds how would that affect things?

Tick the 'Customer choice tariff plans' option if you would like to see a scheme akin to current practice for phone plans or travel tickets – maybe including terms like 'System Rovers', 'Summer Rovers', 'Inclusive lock-miles', 'pre-paid journeys' etc.

Q9 - Congestion charge

An alternative to the 'zoned' standing charge option in Q4.

Q10,11, 12 - Specific payments

Various ways authorities could, or do, charge any boater for specific services.

Q13 - Deductions

Fairly obvious. Note we have included options for fixed rebates instead of percentage discounts, and two options that have been steadfastly refused by BW in spite of user group suggestions - loyalty discounts and allowances for pensioners or boaters over a certain age. Assume that money for deductions must come in the end from those who do not qualify.

NOTICES

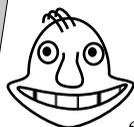
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BSS problem,
Technical advice Trevor Rogers or Tony Haynes

There's trouble on your moorings The regional secretary

You've heard a rumour The local regional secretary

You'd like NABO to attend your local rally Aileen Butler

That paddle is still not working Waterway Reports Board
(Tony Haynes, Richard Carpenter, Stuart Sampson)

You've got this wonderful article for NABO News...Stuart Sampson

You want to help at a rally,
and gain free admittance Aileen Butler

You live on your boat and
you are having problems with moorings Simon Robbins

Please be reassured that any member of NABO Council welcomes contact with members, and will always be pleased to talk to you about any issue.



RIVERS



Attacher au radeau s'il vous plait! - Raft out, please!

David Suchet, erstwhile narrowboater and the face behind the famous moustache of Hercule Poirot on ITV, is now chairman of the Thames Alliance and publicly backed the EA's campaign to encourage rafting out, breasting up, double mooring or whatever you like to call it, on the Thames (probably not what we have called it here - excuse our French!).



The initiative also involves a leaflet and sticker (left) which we hope to include in a future NABO News to encourage the practice. Eileen McKeever, navigation manager on the river, has asked NABO to make its narrowboating members aware of a number of complaints she has been receiving about the amount of mooring space they use and the time they spend on bulk water points. To counter the criticisms often voiced about cruisers, the EA is making a concerted effort to catch speeding boats, so in the interests of harmony, especially around the 'National', we ask that the 'Moor Alongside' campaign be supported.

OFCOM DECIDES ON SHIP'S RADIO LICENCES

Readers of NABO News may recall an article back in May 2005 explaining the latest developments in the use of Marine VHF radios and a consultation exercise that Ofcom had announced to review its ship radio licensing procedures.

We responded positively to the proposal to replace the present annual licence fee with a free "life-time" licence, and the possibility of a self-service licensing service allowing you to print off your own licence from the website. The aim was to encourage more pleasure boaters to install VHF for the safety of life. At present only 800 British ships have compulsory radio installations and it is thought that up to 20 per cent of voluntary fit radios in pleasure and other small craft are unlicensed. We supported the policy adopted in the USA, Australia and New Zealand where domestic craft are exempted from radio licensing altogether. We did not favour the involvement of the MCA in radio licensing.

The results of the consultation have been published and Ofcom reports that of the eighty-nine responses it received, the majority favoured the reforms. Consequently, Ofcom has made a policy decision and with effect from 1 October 2006 licences will cease to be issued annually by the Radio Licensing Centre (part

of Royal Mail) at Bristol. Ships' radio licences will then be issued by Ofcom and will remain valid for as long as the details remain correct or the licence is surrendered or revoked. There will be no end date and the licence will be personal to the licensee for his or her lifetime. They will not be transferable and an on-line, self-service licensing procedure will be introduced in addition to the postal service. The licence document will be printed out and must be kept on board but no licence disc will be displayed. The existing system of licensing will still apply until 30 September 2006.

This appears to be a highly satisfactory outcome and will ease the burden of regulation on boat owners.

Stephen Peters

EA/Surrey Police joint patrol boat for River Thames

A new partnership to patrol the River Thames has been officially launched by North Surrey Police and the Environment Agency.

The pilot scheme is the result of more than a year's work by River Neighbourhood Specialist Officer PC Jim Halstead who has worked informally with the Environment Agency since that time. The new joint patrol boat will operate from Bell weir in Chertsey to the Greater London border at Hampton, taking in three Surrey boroughs; Runnymede, Spelthorne and Elmbridge.

Benefits of the new scheme include the hot desk facility at the Environment Agency's office at Shepperton where PC Halstead can work from, as well as him becoming an extra member of staff for the Environment Agency to add to their five current officers who patrol this stretch of the river. This visible presence should send a reassuring message to boat users and river residents alike.

Another important aspect of partnership working is intelligence gathering, with an information sharing protocol set up between the two agencies. Both PC Halstead and Environment Agency officers have been trained to each agency's mutual benefit and where PC Halstead can assist with bylaw enforcement support, the Environment Agency can assist where appropriate with dealing with anti-social behaviour that may arise – another advantage of having strength in numbers and the presence of the uniformed police officer.

The partnership can also see joint investigations of river related crime and incidents, for example the execution of search warrants

Call **0845 125 2222** for all non-emergency policing matters.

Call **999** if you have a genuine emergency requiring the attendance of the police (e.g. a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger).

Call Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** if you have information about crime and don't want to leave your name.

NABO CRUISE

Firstly, my apologies to everyone dreaming about the Medway! Due to my personal boating schedule this summer, Stuart and I cannot make it to the south-east, so it will be the Medway next year.

For this year, it is planned to cruise the Manchester Ship Canal, between Ellesmere Port and Manchester, with an overnight at Salford Quays before ascending Pamaona Lock onto the Bridgewater Canal. This will take place on Thursday 27th July.

Boats should assemble at Ellesmere Port on Tuesday 25th July. Please be reassured that the Castlefields moorings in Manchester are safe, plentiful, and surprisingly quiet at the weekends, or they were when I was last there! There are considerable discounts on the licence cost available for groups of boats, so it would be ideal if over twenty of you felt that you wanted to join the group.

To register your interest and to receive more information, please contact me on 0113 2842046 or gen.sec@nabo.org.uk, giving your name and address, and she will send full details and an application form to you.

n.b. the final date for returning the completed form will be March 15th.

Carole



The NABO convoy moored up in Bristol after successfully traversing the Severn Estuary on last year's NABO cruise

THE MAKING OF "A VOYAGE BETWEEN TWO SEAS"

Part 6 of A PERSONAL VIEW by Stuart Sampson

We have told the story of The lady Galadriel's part in this BBC North film shot in the early 1980s, but the author was determined to complete the Voyage himself:

ELOPER AND STOWAWAY

Having smelt salt spray from the Mersey, and been the only one to travel all the way by water so far, I wanted to get at least as far as tidal waters on the east side. That is why I went off with the Princess.

Adapting to the role of stowaway I cadged a ride to Goole, and perhaps helped that little bit in the communication between the skipper, Los Hiley, and the film crew.

I leapt aboard the Humber Princess from the bank of the river at Knostrop. She had discharged a cargo of gas oil, about five hundred tons or more, and was returning to Immingham for another load of either gas oil or petrol. It was good of Whitakers to have avoided petrol on this last voyage, Ken and Pete both liked to smoke in safety.

She is a vast vessel, four or five times the Lady in every dimension, and equipped with bow thrusters to keep the sharp end under control, after all it is rather a long way from the wheelhouse aft. Far a seagoing vessel, as she has to be to navigate the Humber Estuary in all weathers, the wheelhouse is amazingly simple. She does have radar, depth sounders and radio, but the actual controls at the helm are just two simple levers like

small door handles, one for engine, the other for steering. A third one is set slightly apart for the bow thruster. Each lever can be pushed back and forth with the little finger, and gives you control of a seven hundred ton vessel, that is if you have the skill of Les Hiley.

We turned and passed through Knostrop flood gates with inches to spare on either side, and made for the lock. Fingers can operate locks on the Aire and Calder too, the lights were green and the gates open as the Humber Princess slid perfectly in and came to a halt on stop ropes. You got this feeling they had done this before. A touch of a button and the top gates closed, another touch of a button in the lock-keepers control tower, the wheeze of hydraulics and the paddle was drawn. There was no frantic effort, no savage rush of water, just a smooth subsiding of the level, and the barge with it.

The click of the button to open the gates was soon answered by the click of the lever that raised a surge of supercharged diesel power, and we gathered speed. Just round the corner was Thwaite Mill, preceded by a very low bridge. From the wheelhouse, with the empty hull high out of the water, we could almost see over the bridge, so for the next trick, the whole wheelhouse dropped like a lift. Peering through the slit of glass still above the deck, we watched the bridge pass inches above us, then we rumbled back up to full height.

Thwaite Mill is being restored as an industrial museum, and inside the power from the river Aire can be seen at work grinding and mixing putty. Downstream is the first of the power stations down the Aire from Leeds, in a state of sad neglect, and opposite a pipe works, which has a bad reputation for frightening the locals with its destructive pressure testing.

The Humber Princess gave us a grandstand view of the surroundings. I resist the temptation to say countryside as most of that has been scooped away by the huge dragline, whose giant jib we saw rearing up as it scraped up another helping of Mother Earth's carboniferous flesh.

Marine designers say that a displacement vessel will travel in knots no faster than the square root of its length in feet, which allows the Humber Princess to go over twice as fast as the Lady Galadriel, and she did. We fair steamed along, stopping only for the locks. Most of the way to Castleford the navigation is a big canal, rejoining the river at Kippax Lock. One remarkable thing about the high technology locks is that they still use wood for the gates, and in some cases these were old and creaked alarmingly under the thrust of the hydraulic rams. It seems that well seasoned oak has yet to be surpassed for this purpose.

Castleford junction has the Aire and Calder rivers flowing in, and separate channels for water and craft flowing out, making a crossroads. The navigation east goes through flood gates, and there are lights to direct the traffic. To enter from the Aire involves a sharp turn, which was

further aggravated for Les by Pete's piece to camera being filmed right on the junction. We also met a set of Cawood-Hargreaves coal pans at this point, pushed in groups of three by their remarkable tugs. These at first sound like 125 trains taking far too long to get past, their turbo-charged engines whining and driven along by steerable propellers like giant outboards. This gives great manoeuvrability, which is vital when the whole combination is almost as big as the Humber Princess. Sometimes you see these tugs with the drive swung right up out of the water.

The navigation returns to the winding river, to pass Castleford itself, and we actually went aground on one of the bends. Even the professionals can have the odd loss of concentration, but luckily she didn't go on too hard. In that situation in a narrow boat you can bring your crew aft and their weight will often tip the boat enough to pull free, but I cannot see this helping much on a two hundred foot tanker barge.

We passed the huge towers of Ferrybridge, the destination of the coal pans and barges, with its great tippler that bodily lifts them out and tips their contents into a hopper. The pans are run into a narrow cut, and pushed through by 'Jumbo', a big yellow machine that runs on rails astride the cut, with an arm to swing down to engage with the next pan and push the queue bodily through the tippler.

Ferrybridge itself, where the Great North Road used to cross the river, is a lovely stone bridge on a sharp bend, and took careful navigating. Les

started the bow thruster engine and used its full power to swing her round and into the flood lock. The

navigation leaves the river here, and if heading for Goole, remains canal all the way. Knottingley marks the end of coal mining with a flourish of industry, including glass and the birthplace of many barges and coasters, Harkers. Opposite the yard, with its flicker of welders and hammering of steel, is the branch to Selby, which rejoins the river far the first half of its journey.

When clear of Knottingley, Doug wanted some shots of the Princess from the bank, and the crew was landed. Les then had to back up and come past. No single screw vessel steers well in reverse, but you might say the Humber Princess had two screws counting the bow thruster, and it comes into its own when going astern. I stayed aboard, keeping a low profile in the wheelhouse as we came into shot and passed the camera. Les then had to go astern and collect the crew, and as he backed, the stern

threatened to ram the bank. No fending off with boatshafts here, it was full rudder and a blast of main engine ahead, sending a cascade of water clean over the towpath and into the fields beyond. Had the crew caught us up by then they would have been washed away. It is as well that those tankers do not have to fulfill the whims of filming every day.

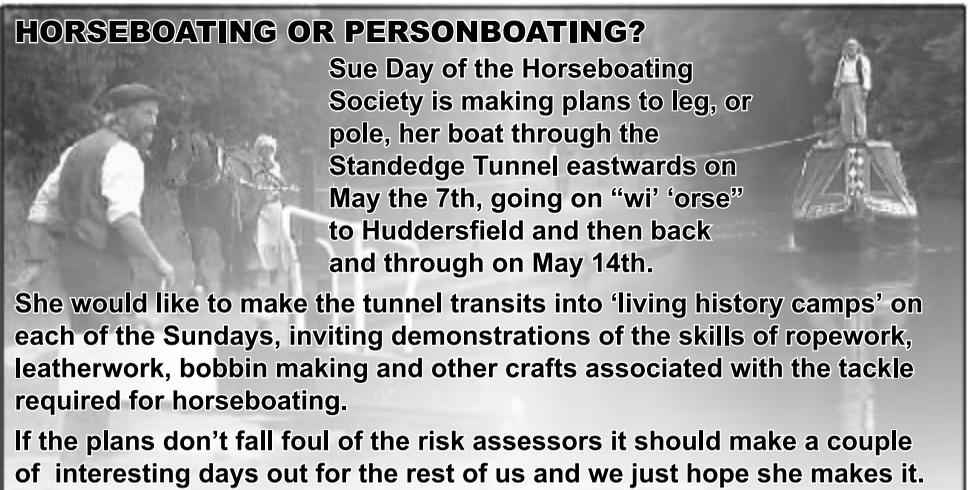
There was a rail strike on at the time, which made it safer to use a railway bridge for the higher angle shots, but on the whole filming was done from the vessel. Apart from the junction with the New Junction Canal there was little of interest on the flat straight run up to Goole itself. We reached Goole quite late, after a long day, and I was within spitting distance of the tidal Ouse. I wouldn't call it the sea though, but I had travelled the full length of the non-tidal waters that cross England, and gone from one port to another. I did however manage to continue my journey later aboard the Humber Keel 'Comrade'.

HORSEBOATING OR PERSONBOATING?

Sue Day of the Horseboating Society is making plans to leg, or pole, her boat through the Standedge Tunnel eastwards on May the 7th, going on "wi' 'orse" to Huddersfield and then back and through on May 14th.

She would like to make the tunnel transits into 'living history camps' on each of the Sundays, inviting demonstrations of the skills of ropework, leatherwork, bobbin making and other crafts associated with the tackle required for horseboating.

If the plans don't fall foul of the risk assessors it should make a couple of interesting days out for the rest of us and we just hope she makes it.



FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

I was on that chilly wall for too long at the last Council meeting, but of course thinking of how useful I could be to you by telling you now of items that may interest you.

So it's out with the diaries to note that this year's AGM has been confirmed for the 18 November at the Bonded Warehouse at Stourbridge and to be attended by not only your goodselves but also the Ombudsman, Hilary Bainbridge!

Something else that all noted was the presence of Merleen Watson who will look after NABO's public relations.

They were a couple of items of positive news. The Government is looking at the case for NOT increasing the price of red diesel. BMF and RYA have presented submissions. Is it worth holding your breaths?

Also BW have confirmed they will look into having different mooring times on canals where there just seemed to be 48 hours, especially those where folks were most upset.

Various of your reps expressed their dissatisfaction with BW not issuing minutes after User Group Meetings.

They issue 'Notes' but these are not legal documents, whereas proper Minutes are. Council decided that at any meeting NABO attends they would ask for minutes and maybe the requests would be reported back to Watford resulting, hopefully, in minutes becoming the national norm.

There was a short discussion on the 'End of Garden moorings' policy. This is that mooring fees should be 50% of the cost of the moorings with no facilities in the same area..

Unfortunately for boaters in their area, Central Shires are using the average cost of moorings. Your regional reps will check how their areas are interpreting the policy. Have you any experience of this or useful information? One of the problems seems to be that the new BW areas are larger than the old ones and could now include canals with lower fees - shame! It had also been noted that the waiting lists for moorings were being used as a pricing measure. Council agreed that the lists were only only reliable enough to be used to judge the popularity of a mooring and not to raise the mooring fees. They will question this policy, especially as there seems to be a lack of openness and accountability.

Safety regulations were also discussed. At present these come from BSS, navigational authorities, insurance companies and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency {MCA} for passengers and trip boats. Council thought that surely MCA

regulations should apply to salty waters only. Their new regulations for the boatmasters licence, which WAS for tidal waters now seems to include narrowboats! Your safety rep will go to relevant meetings to assess the practicability for members. Council wondered whether there should be ONE organisation which dealt purely with all safety aspects for boats on inland waters.

Another positive note was the success of the year's membership trial between NABO and RCR {River and Canal Rescue}. Some RCR members had joined NABO through this scheme so it was decided the offer would continue and a new NABO information leaflet produced for RCR members.

Licensing took up a large part of the meeting - again. Something to do

with white paper. It won't stay white if I can get to land on it! It was felt BW was concentrating too much on the use of the boat, i.e. the more you use your boat the more you pay. Council's other grouse was that Cabinet guidelines on consultation were being quoted but not followed properly. It was therefore unclear where BW were trying to go and how they were doing it. It was agreed that any future review should follow the proper processes including early consultations!

The Newsletter and website will keep you up to date with the White Paper's progress.

Meanwhile I shall progress to another and warmer wall

Till next time

Byeeeeee!



Public Consultation on Residential Boating Issues

(closes 21 Feb 2006)

For a copy of the document please call 0870 122 62 36 (ODPM publications team) or follow www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161848.

I am aware many members do not live on their boats and of those who do, not all have official residential moorings or any mooring. I nonetheless encourage members with any interest or views on the subject to write to the ODPM if there is something relevant you feel you can offer. The list that follows, prepared by a group of us who have boats on long-term residential moorings and who have been consultees to the ODPM (see NN October 2005), represents some common concerns that residential boaters with moorings have identified. As you will gather we are not at all impressed with the deal we sometimes get.

This is a public consultation and therefore there is no right or wrong answer. Please call or e-mail Clive Wren or myself if you wish to discuss matters.

As I pointed out to Council this week, *"The problem is that it is only the reasonable people who come to the table and work through specific problems, who observe the codes of practice etc.... What do we do about those (who in some cases over many years) will not reason and negotiate?"*

Regards to all – Simon Robbins *"Mooring Matters"*

A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTIAL BOATERS

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has issued a consultation paper on whether there is a need for protective legislation for residential boats at long-term moorings. The Residential Boat Owners Association (RBOA) tried to introduce a private members bill some 25 years ago. This is the first time that government has taken the initiative in this matter.

Why is protective legislation necessary?

- Following passage of the Mobile Homes Act 2004, residential boats are the only dwellings in the UK without protective legislation - "an anomaly in the law" (The Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind QC KCMG)
- Navigation authorities are autonomous monopolies established by statute - measures are required to prevent these powers being abused
- The Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and the Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999 cited in the paper do not apply and are ineffective safeguards
 - Arbitrary, non-negotiable mooring rent increases - residential boats are no longer affordable housing
- Unfair treatment under other legislation such as VAT and planning
- No affordable legal process - there's no Landlord and Tenant tribunal for residential boats
- Risk of summary or constructive eviction without cause
- Best practice guidance and model agreements lack force of law and are ignored
- You or someone you know has been a victim of at least one of the above
- Residential boaters are being deprived of their human rights

Which boats would be covered?

- Residential boats (mobile and immobile) on long-term moorings
- Non residential boats moored temporarily or for holiday purposes

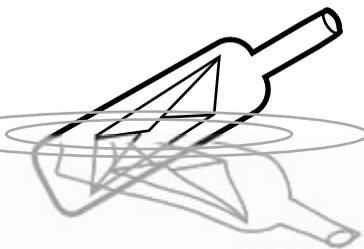
What should you do now?

- Write to the ODPM covering these points and any examples relevant to you
- Send a copy of your letter and arrange to meet your MP, local Councillors and regional Assembly Members, seeking their urgent support for protective legislation
- Tell other boat residents and neighbours and urge them to do the same - ask to meet your MP /Councillors/Assembly Members together
- Send a copy to clivewren@aol.com

For ODPM enquiries ring 020 7944 3465. For enquiries about this briefing note ring Clive Wren on 020 8742 7944.

Respond before 21 February 2006 by email to John.Connell@odpm.gsi.gov.uk or by post to John Connell, ODPM, 2/H10 Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU.

LETTERS



"To be, or not to be?"

That is the question"

Having been a member of the Association for more years than I care to remember, I have always been aware that people pronounce its name differently.

I have always pronounced it "Nay-bo" but many members and outsiders call it "Nabbo". I've noticed that some Council members say "Narbo".

Which should it be?

Yorkshire men say the city near Bristol is "Bath" not "Barth" because there is no "R" in Bath!

I say there is no "R" in NABO; and if pronounced with a hard "A" it sounds like we are an association for NARrow BOats. So, as a river cruiser I think it should be "Naybo" so as not to deter any would-be members having a wider beam.

What do members think? Is it important? You say NABO and I say NABO. Shall we call the whole thing off?

Stephen Peters

Illusions of grandeur? These Severn users would want it pronounced as though it was the North Atlantic Boating Organisation! Ed.

Veg Pledge

I thought you might like to know that BW having been doing some trimming in and around Braunston towards Napton and towards Crick road bridge on the North Oxford.

This was so pleasing as we've trimming bits ourselves over the last six years and have even been congratulated by passing boaters, and told to up the good work. but the only sad thing is that from Calcutt locks towards Stockton have not yet been touched yet. so it looks like we will still be busy trimming perhaps for other six years!

Well, where is this trimming that we are going on about, you might ask - well wait for it - its the off side where they have been doing some of the veg pledge work, We were shocked to say the least as it means we can see at bridge holes and corners, because as we all know the speed kings like to cut corners.

Now what will be nice if BW could do the towpath just outside of Braunston towards Crick as it has become very popular for mooring,

I know "don't push your luck" so we should be grateful for small things.

Bridget & Denis Mitchell

Out of Context! - extracts from early responses to fee survey

All licences should include a basic mooring charge which is refunded for those who have a recognized permanent mooring.

My view is that BW is bowing to pressure from APCO who see (e.g.) Ownerships as commercial competition and wish to "tax" them - but in fact are "taxing" private individuals whose money pays the agency charges.

Charging for extended mooring at visitor moorings will prevent the shortage of mooring space at popular moorings.

How much longer we will be able to bear the canals as they seem to be going I don't know, but we do love the life cruising around the British countryside playing and singing our music.

EA to match BW with licence fees payable monthly for small supplement. EA fees being demanded just after Christmas are inconveniently timed to say the least!

Perhaps a way of measuring use would be to have a record of engine hours ...it would concentrate the mind on the environmental damage I may be doing.

Club Bulk Licensing— seems to me no different to shared-ownership management co's applying for licences on behalf of their owners, except that the club does get an actual benefit rather than passing on the actual charge

Quote from senior APCO man " you cannot manage a waterway from behind a

computer". We should be pushing BW into simplifying charging structures

The standing charge should relate to the amount of the network your boat can use. Charges should not go up with the size of the craft. The usage charge should relate to how far you cruise.

EA bid strongly to retain their position as navigation authority and won - they knew what they were in for - no sympathy when they now bleat that they haven't got enough money. Should have thought of that before.

In most instances there would be a rough justice e.g. a big dutch barge or "gin palace" has a more restricted system to enjoy. Heaven forbid if charges were to be managed like taxes are at present!!!

How about the same basic licence cost for all usage? BW already has "trading agreements" with waterway based business, and these could be used to recover some of the extra cost.

I cannot think of a logical argument to support licence fee reductions for Electric powered boats or Historic boats within what is supposed to be a commercially managed organization. In my view it reflects muddled thinking, arising from misplaced sentimentality.

Around 1980 the licence and mooring at the time was approx £1000. Cost for 200 miles was £5 a mile, that's a lot for a holiday, my present boat is from Holland and will return there when refitted, I will never be trapped on BW waters again - definite.

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

COUNTER

POINTS

*Views from the
tiller 'dahn sarf'
by Canaldrifter*

The berks have been interfering with the locks at Berko on the Grand Union again. Apparently it's great fun to wind up paddles at both ends of the locks, and cause local flooding. BW has countered this by padlocking the paddle-gear at night. However this prevents legitimate passage through the locks. It also costs BW about £1,000 per week in extra wages. Tell you what. Pay me half that and give me a local mooring and I'll watch the locks all night for you!

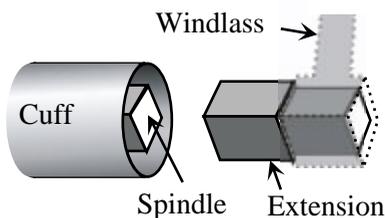
Despite extra patrols and an offered reward for information, attempts to catch the idiots have failed. BW propose that boater operated locks using standard BW sanitary station keys could be installed for a few grand. However, these keys are everywhere, and they are certainly not exclusive to BW. What a shame we can't have combination padlocks on chains. The combination could then be changed periodically and issued annually with our licences.

Our London Secretary, Adrian Stott suggested a form of fitted cuff around the spindle that would prevent the use

of the standard windlass, or Dad's Stilsons, without a special extension. However, already there is excellent lockable paddle-gear in use on the Huddersfield Broad Canal. Maybe BW regions could talk to each other and standardise such locking devices based on this example.

Of course, all of this would have been unnecessary if we still had lengthsmen who lived in nearby lock cottages.

Ever received a Response Form for BW, filled it in, sent it back, and wondered what happens to the info you give? Have you considered that the information might be used against you? This certainly happened when BW sought information from 'continuous cruisers' [I do hate these labels, we are all 'boat owners'] about their mooring habits. Thinking it was a survey against overstaying, some seem to have exaggerated their movements. This response was then used by 'our' BW Boating Development Officer to propose that continuous cruisers should pay a much higher rate of licence fee. See the danger? We would be wise in future to consider how information given in Response Forms could be misused. Once bitten.... ?



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