

INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS

NABO



NEWS

- **BW stoppages 'in season'?**
- **Canalwatch schemes, what can they do?**
- **Coping with Thames Summer drought**



Issue 3 May 2006

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EDITORIAL I am sorry this magazine is a bit thin. Difficult to say why – maybe we are a bit ‘between issues’ so there is not much to report, with BW licensing resolving, the fate of red diesel still with the EC, and EA funding in an impasse with DEFRA. Also the ‘Voyage Between Two Seas’ series has ended and no-one has offered much to fill the gap.

To make up the weight we are enclosing a colourful map card to help you abbreviate text reports and perhaps give you a useful overview of the system when planning a cruise. It will also tell you which waterway office is responsible for which waters – phone numbers are on the back.

2006 CALENDAR

Council meeting	Copy date
June 3rd	June 10th
July 15th	July 22nd
Sept 16th	Sept 23rd
Nov 18th	AGM
Nov 25th	Dec 7th

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



It has been great to get afloat again, after a winter stuck in front of a computer or sitting in trains and meetings – working for you lot! We have been out for a fortnight, cruising from Barton to Autherley and back.

I was a little perturbed by the lack of trees at Tixall Wide. The felling has opened up nice views across the Shugborough estate and the mating calls of the grebe are now accompanied by the sounds of logging as boaters tuck in to the bounty, but it is going to be sweltering in the summer if the sun comes out.

I will have to say that generally the canal banks were trimmed, paddles greased and there was plenty of water, so well done BW! – don't let the nettles spoil it. The only fault I had reason to report was leakage through the top gates at Colwich Lock. I assume, from the placing of the 'Welcome to BW West Midlands' sign, that the top gates are maintained by them and the bottom gates by the other lot – Central Shires?

Also on a positive, I repeat, positive note – I took a call while in our galley from the Head of Boating Development and had a very friendly and productive discussion. She was seeking our approval for shared ownerships licences to be based on whether the **applicant** was a business or an individual. Of course I could ask why that didn't happen in the first place, but at least it is happening now and hopefully we can put the licensing issue behind us.

What surprised me was the sort of things she didn't know, and the things she didn't know that she didn't know. Perhaps what has gone wrong before is that we expected her to know what she didn't know. Anyway, (with apologies

to Sir Humphrey Appleby) it is our role to let her know what she doesn't know. I'm not saying she doesn't know anything, she is very expert in the theoretical side. Neither do we know everything, but with the aid of some frank and friendly discussion, knowledge is shared and NABO has made things better for boaters. Isn't that what we are about?

Other things we have achieved recently - and knowing these could be worth £5, £10 or £15 to you if you convince others to join:-

- **Diesel campaign** - Look at our website to see a letter from the Treasury acknowledging NABO's contribution. This is not just praise for our representatives, it is as much about the letters from you.
- **'Veg Pledge'** - This magazine coined the phrase and Robin Evans took it up. The state of the canals we enjoyed during Easter week bore testament to the encouragement NABO gave BW to control growth, particularly between the water and the towpath. Even where the ecologists want it left, BW has promised us in writing to heed our request and cut some lengths to aid casual mooring.
- **EA Legislation** - The Environment Agency is looking for new powers through an Order under the Transport and Works Act. NABO, admittedly singing from the same hymn sheet as other groups, held firm in its opposition to the Order until clauses were built in to guarantee proper consultation. Now we are working with EA on its 'Harmonisation Forum' to ensure the powers are used in the best interests

of the navigations and those who use them.

• **Safety and Taming the BSS** - We are still represented on the committees and our unsung heroes are still querying the excesses of the boffins and 'jobs-worths' in Watford, Southampton and Brussels. We have achieved a lot already.

• **Waterway Reporting** - We are again working *with* the authorities to apply the fast and effective means NABO created, using today's technology, to log problems on the waterways and make boaters aware what might affect them. In particular using it against anti-social behaviour, a big concern to all.

• **Gathering opinions** - Wasn't it NABO who surveyed members and other boaters about alcohol laws, diesel usage and fair charges for boating? (May I just take this opportunity to thank the 250 or so members who took the trouble to reply to the fee survey, but wonder why, even with reply-paid envelopes provided, so many didn't!)

So - who says everything we do is '*anti*' and we don't take into account the views of those we represent?

However we still need at times to try to alter the 'mind set' of the authorities in the interests of our members. On a local level we have persuaded BW to re-calculate some end-of-garden mooring fees and members have had their bills reduced. Our main challenge now is at Government level, persuading DEFRA to rethink its demands on boaters' pockets on EA rivers. They could face a 14% rise year on year perhaps for the next nine years due to conditions imposed on EA's Grant-in-Aid. As Peter Lea, previous chair of NABO, put it, "*Would the last boaters to leave the Thames please close the lock gates behind them*".

We have recently been commended for highlighting BW's trial of a planned stoppage in May to replace gates on the W&B. The message in our e-mail bulletin was picked up by a member who owns and runs a hotel boat, and he has since asked whether NABO could do more for commercial owner/operators.

As we represent boat owners without stipulating what they use their boats for, there is no reason why not, providing of course, we don't favour any minority at the expense of the majority. These 'modern-day Number Ones' are charged ten times as much to belong to commercial organisations like APCO. They then find themselves bound by rules and regulations that take little account of their needs, and are expected, as 'proper businesses', to do things like downloading 1 megabyte bulletins though a mobile phone. (We could send 100 bulletins in that time!)

As regards 'minority' groups, we are also being approached by syndicate boaters who had tried to form their own group, S.I.B.U.G., but hadn't a big enough volunteer base to keep it going. We already have private share owners as members and welcome more on the same understanding: that we don't favour a minority at the expense of the majority. Sharing is one of the best ways to start boating, and to continue boating when full ownership is beyond one's means.

Providing we give due respect to our Constitution, NABO should seek to become the leading inland boat owners' representative body in terms of size as well as expertise and enthusiasm. We have the respect of the authorities, we need to gain more respect from the boat owning community as a whole.

Happy cruising

Stuart

STOPPAGES 'IN SEASON'?

British Waterways is experimenting with the idea of closures in May.

Our Midlands Secretary was approached to comment on a trial planned Spring stoppage to replace the gates at Offerton No 12 lock on the Worcester & Birmingham, causing a 24 hour stoppage on the 9th of May. BW Central Shires claims that only 3 boats went that way on the corresponding Tuesday last year, yet the long daylight hours would make the job possible in one day and save money for use elsewhere on the system.

This is not the first 'out-of-season' stoppage in the past few years. We hope lessons were learnt from the inconvenience caused by poor advertising of the closure and draining of the Don Aqueduct (New Junction) in high summer so the paint applied to the inside of its trough could dry in warmer weather. That was much longer than one day though and blocked the main route to Yorkshire.

As NABO maintains there is no such thing as a 'cruising season', we cannot really object to BW closing the canal for maintenance during 'it'. What we can and are requesting is proper notice. Signs should be placed so boaters know about it **before** they pass the last chance to find an alternative route, as well as before the last turning point. These should be posted at least a fortnight in advance and preferably more if the last diversion point is a long way back and the closure likely to be more than the odd day or two.

We would also expect general publicity and special regard for hotel boats, hire bases and anyone else with schedules. Waterscape and NABO Waterway Reports should carry postings and the dates discussed with users wherever possible.

If the practice becomes common we need to keep a careful watch on how it affects boating.

NABO GUIDANCE NOTES EXPANDED

If you use the NABO website you will discover that there is a section dedicated to the Guidance Notes that have been written to provide specialist information on a number of boating topics. Most of the documents are available only to members and require a password (ask the Webmaster). We have recently added new titles and more will follow.

Just in case you have forgotten, we list below the titles presently available:

- Aire and Calder Skippers Guide
- Buying a boat
- Registration
- Maritime VHF radio
- Cruising on BW rivers
- Flags - Q&A
- Gloucester & Sharpness cruising notes
- Ribble Link cruising notes
- Right of Navigation
- River Dee cruising notes
- River Medway cruising notes (draft)
- Severn Pilotage notes
- Trailing notes
- Tidal Trent Skippers Guide

If you are unable to find your requirements listed, please ask

IN YOUR DREAMS?

Imagine, if you will, a 200 year-old waterway network where nothing goes wrong.

Dream on! ...but ... imagine a 200 year-old waterway network, where things do go wrong, but now has 100,000 extra lengthsman, who inspect it by boat!

Imagine also that their observations are automatically sent to the right waterway office, as well as being recorded, along with progress reports and planned work, on the length's 'wall chart': there being in total 150 of these, all on public display.

Imagine further that, before you cruise, you can inspect these charts – without even stepping outside, let alone having to find a waterway office open.

Now imagine that you can arrange for information to be sent to you about the areas you might wish to cruise as soon as it comes in, without you even having to search the boards for it.*

... and it all happens '24/7' without the need of office staff.

PINCH YOURSELF! – No, you are not dreaming – it's all reality for those online and a lot of it is for those who aren't ... or it could be if **NABO's Waterway Reports Forum** was used to its full potential. OK, our 'lengthsman' are all the boat users and their families on the GB network. Admittedly most work part time and can't carry out their duties without a text-capable phone or access to a computer, but even if just **one conscientious boater per week** cruised each waterway and fed in anything worth reporting, it could make a big difference.

SO WHAT IS STOPPING IT HAPPENING?

Apathy - normal human nature and selfishness on the part of users: "*Leave it to someone else. We've got through OK so why bother to report it?*"

Inertia - the concept is new, "*What was wrong with what we did before?*"

Saving face? - no navigation authority thought of the forum idea for themselves. Even worse: it was created by an organisation that some love to hate.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO IMPROVE MATTERS?

NABO has improved the site so you can find a length's board by waterway name, as well as a 'click-on' system map and a menu of waterway office domains.

You can also type in the map square number if you work from one of our maps on paper. We have also cleared out most resolved issues from previous years.

EA Thames is being asked to use it to post river event stoppages and restrictions.

BW promises a 'culture change', which is spreading slowly, seemingly from the SSYN. Good on you, Kevin Fisher!

WATERSCAPE.COM is supposed to be linking to the site - yet to happen.

AINA (the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities) has been approached for support.

YOU can post or text us more reports and take better advantage of the information on the boards.

(*A service for NABO members and system sponsors only)

So much for the hard sell – A reminder of the facts:-

Web Address = www.nabo.org.uk/ww_reports/
 or, just click the button on the entry page of www.nabo.org.uk,
 or, click the water under the boat at the bottom of the pages within the site

Text numbers: **07930 419 981 07961 001814 07989 441674**

Report Forwarding for NABO Members

To arrange to be e-mailed fresh postings, go to the members-only pages on the website and follow the links to receive reports. Choose the region you want and sign in on the little form that comes up when you click the column header on the table. Sign out using the same form. Sign in to as many regions as you want.

We ask that if you are not a member, or are subscribing for a non-member, you either join NABO or give us a donation.

Note the Email addresses on these lists cannot be accessed by anyone other than the NABO webmaster and the administrators of the hosting service, who have very strict anti-abuse regulations. They will not be divulged to any third party.

Waterway Office domains ↓	Reports Regions →	Scotland	Northwest	Northeast	Midlands	Anglian	South & West	Southeast
BW Scotland		X						
BW Northwest			X					
BW Yorkshire				X				
ABP Tidal Trent				X				
BW Borders & Wales			X					
BW West Midlands					X			
BW Central Shires					X			
BW East Midlands				X				
EA Anglian						X		
EA/PLA Thames								X
BW Southwest							X	
BW Southeast								X
BW London								X
MSC & Bridgewater			X					
Middle Level						X		
Norfolk Broads						X		
Warwickshire Avon					X			
Basingstoke Canal							X	
NT River Wey							X	

Waterway Reports

FOR YOUR SAFETY

LATEST MORSELS FROM THE BSS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Ongoing concerns include the use of portable fuel tanks feeding permanent engine installations, and vice versa. This may become an issue as boaters who use red diesel for cooking/heating try to provide for themselves two fuel supplies.

How do you recognise a soft-soldered joint? Scratch it with a pen-knife seems to be the popular method. Such joints made with materials that do not reach British Standards are unacceptable on fuel and gas pipework. Are yours OK? How do you know?

Needle valves cannot be used as isolators on gas systems. The argument 'turns' on them not being positively 'off' when closed. There is also no indication of valve position, unlike a 90 degree lever type valve. If you are extending your gas system, watch out for these valves. They are being sold.... cheap.

It is possible to find refillable LPG bottle on the market, though they are not being sold directly to boaters.... yet. Only those bottles that have an 80 per cent fill/stop valve, and pressure relief valves fitted, are deemed safe. An explosive situation could result from accidental (or deliberate) overfilling, due to thermal expansion. Any boat having a refillable LPG bottle without these valves would be deemed unsafe, and subjected to the dangerous boat procedure... if only for the safety of the examiner.

An appeal by a boater who had fitted an Eberspacher heater in a petrol engine space, failed. Best to enquire first.

Appeals by boaters who have fuel fillers below deck level, but had fitted anti-spill prevention, were accepted. Their boats are probably less likely to spill fuel on top-up than the average narrowboater's set-up.

An appeal by a sail-boater who had fitted a gas bottle in the same locker-space as his outboard engine location, failed. His set-up was deemed not to be an 'open space', which may have passed. Again, check first before installation.

A member of NABO raised the issue of BSC failures on narrowboats due to batteries not being secured vertically. Apparently standards say they should be, and examiners have been instructed to enforce this. However, most narrowboats are built without vertical restraint of batteries because it is unnecessary. This matter is causing inconsistency amongst examiners, and consternation amongst boat-builders. It will be referred to the Electrical Standards Working Group in the hope that common sense will prevail, and non-trailable narrowboats will be granted exemption.

If your gas flame blows out, how long does it take for the Flame Failure Device to shut off the gas supply, if you have one? If it fails, does it fail safe or unsafe?

Some facts: One examiner is carrying out almost 700 inspections a year. 50% of total inspections are carried out by just 20 examiners. Ventilation is the main cause of failure at 7.9%, and battery security (vertically?) comes next at 3.9%, over a six month period.

Tony Haynes

WHAT A CANAL WATCH SCHEME CAN DO.

2004 was a bad year on the Basingstoke. We suffered much vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Flying stones broke windows on a trip-boat. A dredger was set on fire. Machinery was attacked. Overflow weirs were damaged, causing massive water loss. A woman and her dog were thrown bodily into the cut by a drunken youth. A hire boat operator's car was trashed because he made a stand against a local disruptive gang.

To combat the situation the Basingstoke Canal Watch Scheme was launched at Easter 2005, to cover the Surrey half of the canal. The scheme is similar to a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, except it is linear, and has no official membership. It brought together the canal authority, the local police, boaters and towpath users... anyone, in fact, who has an interest in making the canal a safe place to enjoy.

We received sponsorship and help from Surrey Police, Bob Potter's Lakeside Group of Companies (of World Darts fame), John Cale Canal Cruises, the Basingstoke Angling Association, Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society, NABO, and the Basingstoke Canal Authority.

Notices were displayed, giving advice about how to report incidents. Numbered posts were placed along the towpath to make locations easier to identify. A sponsored canal watch report form was produced in great numbers, and distributed to local house-holders and canal users.

Within two weeks the scheme had its first success. Two young lads dropped stones and a glass bottle on to a busy trip boat as it passed beneath a bridge. Within minutes they had been 'arrested' in a nearby park by the local police, and escorted home. Their mothers were genuinely shocked that their little darlings could do such a dangerous thing. As it was a first offence, they were warned and let off, provided they came to the canal centre and apologised to the boat owner, which they did, tearfully.

2005 was a fairly quiet year. We had a window broken on a moored boat. Other children throwing stones were chased and caught by a boat owner, and the police were called. They leafleted all nearby housing. A few eggs have been thrown. A pound was drained by misuse of paddle-gear. Generally, incidents were minimal. The Watch Scheme was declared a success. So much so that this year we are extending it into Hampshire so that the entire length of the canal will be covered. Similar schemes have been started elsewhere in the country with varying success. Unfortunately they often die away because they were started by boaters or local police who soon move on. In our case, the Basingstoke Canal Watch Scheme is administered by the Canal Authority itself, with the help of volunteers, thus giving it continuity.

BW also produces an Incident Report Form which is distributed to all boat owners and is available at BW offices and outlets. NABO hosts a Waterways Report Forum open to all on their website. (www.nabo.org.uk/ww_reports/) Working together with NABO, all this information is being collated by Peter Wade, Safety Advisor to BW. Hot-spot areas are being identified, and the extent of the problem monitored. AINA is now setting up a similar scheme that will cover all waterways.

However, moving anti-social behaviour away to somewhere else does not cure the problem. Engagement with bored, alienated youths, who are led by misguided peer-pressure, must be encouraged. Back on the Basingstoke, together with local organisations, particularly local Quakers, businesses, the police and nearby army units, this year we held a Grand Easter Raft-fest to encourage youths in a positive use of the canal. The idea was to show them that the waterways are something they can enjoy instead of trying to destroy.



Photo by the author

In our litigious society, this was not easy to organise. We had to find ten million pounds worth of public liability insurance. This was achieved by becoming the first canal watch scheme to be accepted into corporate membership of the IWA. We also had to provide paramedic ambulance cover for the race. Local Quakers were most generous in paying for this. The Basingstoke Canoe Club and the army helped by providing safety afloat. SC Johnson Ltd (Johnson's Wax) financed a marquee for a popular evening free concert with nationally known blues band, Spikedrivers. NABO paid for advertising in the local press. The race was covered by Meridian Television News.

It was all worth it. At the prize-giving ceremony, the youth who accepted a winner's cup for his college was the same youth who, two years ago, used to come around jeering at us and taunting us whenever vandalism occurred. The event was so successful in raising folks' awareness of the canal that it is hoped to hold another in August 2006, and a further, bigger event, combined with a mixed music mini-festival, in May 2007.

I was recently able to present a paper to the All Parties Parliamentary Waterways Group on this subject. A paper has also been distributed to all BW Regional Managers, and to the EA. We urge them to set up and maintain similar schemes in their trouble-spot areas. It works. It doesn't cost much. It's easy to find sponsorship for leaflets and signs. The schemes must be high profile however, but local press, radio and TV are keen to give support.

Working together with user-groups and volunteers, such as anglers, canoeists and boating organisations, this can be achieved, making the waterways a safer place to be. Anyone wanting to set up such a local scheme would have the full support of NABO in seeking sponsorship, and volunteers to help administer it.

A visiting Internet VW campervan club joined us for the Raft-fest. Their children borrowed three spare truck inner-tubes from an army team, lashed them together with a couple of pallets, and, in the race, beat the elaborate army raft over the entire course! The kids were the overall winners. The army didn't realise that the towpath was there for towing boats. The children did. They will travel back to all ends of the country with a greater knowledge of the waterways, and what fun they can be.

Would you like to help set up a canal watch scheme in your area? Why not contact your BW regional office, and suggest it?

*Tony Haynes
Vice Chairman NABO
Gen Sec Basingstoke Canal Watch Scheme*

Some Moorings Matters – *Highlighted by Simon Robbins*

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's report on Security of Tenure for Residential Moorings is due in early May. Please watch out for the report and let us have any further thoughts on this, whether you live on your boat or not.

BW has, in the interim, suggested looking into longer than annual mooring agreements and whether boaters with BW moorings should be allowed to sell the boat on the mooring if BW get a cut of the sale price. Would anyone actually be interested (and able) to secure a mooring say for seven or ten years by means a suitable advance payment? Neither suggestion is a formal proposal from BW, and both have been offered in the spirit of doing more consultation with boaters at an early stage in the thought process.

About BW mooring fee increases – some members are taking it up with their local offices. My experience to date is that BW is extremely reluctant to reduce fees but you can sometimes get a bit of movement on repairs or improvements if these are not up to scratch and if you are persistent! If any members have successfully got BW to reduce mooring fees from their initial proposals, I and other members would be very interested to know how you argued for it.

BW's policy also says that large increases in annual fees, (more than £375 in a year) should be phased in and there should be transitional increases over more than one year. Anyone effected should talk to their local office and refer to the policy as I have one example where this was ignored. I can forward copies of the appropriate BW guidance to members electronically (pdf) or by post.

Alternatively look in the members section of our website on:

<http://www.nabo.org.uk/members/pricingguidelines06.pdf>

As reported elsewhere EA has a funding problem so it is likely to increase its mooring fees significantly over the next few years. We will be watching!

I have received two members' complaints and many other anecdotes about BW unreasonably charging for overstaying on visitors' moorings. One had a bill for over £1000 when he had moved on in the first 24 hours of the alleged overstay period and could prove it. Another was sent a bill having previously sought permission to stay on a few extra days from BW bank staff. Council supports overstaying penalties being applied where appropriate, but please let us know if there are other examples of inconsistent or unfair application of this policy.

We are keeping as close an eye as we can on the spread of 24 and 48 hour moorings. Please let us know if you come across examples where you feel this is being applied arbitrarily or inappropriately.

I keep getting enquiries about how boaters might go about setting up and running their own moorings. Based on personal experience this is difficult, but can be achieved if you stick at it and use your wits. It is a complex area about which to give people any concrete suggestions and I would welcome any thoughts members feel they can share. Given the overall shortage of moorings there is also a real issue with everyone I speak to about the need to be very discreet for fear of being gazumped. Do people feel NABO should look into this area some more?

RCR Advert

NOTICES

Text your
waterway
reports to:

07930 419 981
07961 001814
07989 441674

POST FOR NABO NEWS

For issue 4/06 the editor will be afloat so please send items by email to news.editor@nabo.org.uk

Failing that by post, well in advance to:-

48 Old Lane, Bramhope,
Leeds LS16 9AZ

BEEN DESPERATE?

Overwhelmed with rubbish?
Full toilet? No water? Empty
diesel tank? Leaking boat?

Please tell NABO where you think facilities or repair yards are missing on the waterway network.

Email: fac@nabo.org.uk or write to the NABO address on page 22 with the word 'FACILITIES' on the envelope

CRICK SHOW

See us in
Marquee C
stand 62

BOATING COSTS
Survey soon, start
calculating now!

BW NW

The new number for the
BW Wigan Office is:
01942 405700

£5 off your sub

Money back for you when a new member joins up having put **your** name in the 'introduced by' box on his or her application form (up to a maximum of 3)

Life membership for £150
+ £50 for each 'family member'



RIVERS



ROWING CHANNEL ON THE THAMES TIDEWAY

The PLA have delineated a oarsmen's channel on the Surrey bank of the tideway Thames. The markers are buoys.

One of the buoys was dragged out of position by a narrowboat turning about having discovered that when told the river is closed, the river is closed.

We need to publicise the existence of this channel and we need to explain to narrowboaters that keeping towards the centre of the river is beneficial to fuel consumption and in their best interests. Such a course will also keep them away from the rowing channel.

Can you use your good offices and magazines to mention this please? Michael Shefras has kindly agreed to keep a watching brief for narrowboaters on the PLA committee, there being little of general interest for us. However occasionally as in this instance there is relevance and I have agreed to pass on such items of note to you gentlemen.

DROUGHT ON THE THAMES

Boaters, not resident in the South East of England, have no real appreciation of the fact that the River Thames is experiencing severe drought conditions. Below average rainfall has reduced ground water levels to near all time lows. This one single factor has an immense impact on the amount of water flowing down the river.

Unless there are significant rainfalls very soon, the ground water situation will get worse. The rainfall needs to be in the South East of England and over the River Thames watershed. Frankly, it is generally expected that the drought conditions will get worse.

The River Thames will not be closed to navigation. Visitors will continue to be welcomed onto the river. The IWA National at Beale Park will happen.

However, boaters may have to abide by restrictions that need not impair the pleasure to be derived from a visit to the Thames. In fact these constraints can make your visit all the more enjoyable. You must accept that they are consequent of problems above and beyond the control of the navigation authority. Everything depends on the spring and summer rainfall over the Thames Valley.

At the end of this article are telephone numbers and web addresses that you may use to get the latest information. Your views, as long as they are not anonymous, are very welcome at the same locations. Each lock notice board will carry the very latest information concerning local and full river conditions with any temporary variations. Any member of the navigation authority staff will be happy to answer questions and some may even be prepared to practise clairvoyance. The constraints

have been discussed, in detail, with boaters' organisations and you may be assured there is a good reason for all the rules even if they may seem to be silly. Be certain they are not. Do not presume you know better. You will not.

So please understand that what is now planned is so designed to allow the optimum number of boaters to navigate as quickly and conveniently as possible from one end of the river to the other. Equally, those wishing to dawdle will be encouraged to do so.

All locks will usually be manned by fully trained navigation staff. If the drought worsens and a lock is not manned, it is quite likely that you will not be allowed to pass through. Look to see what is displayed on the notice boards, lock offices or lock gates; but do not be surprised if the lock is disabled and passage is stopped. This will most likely be before 9.00am and after 7.00pm. Lunchtime working should be available at the busiest times but certainly not something you can rely upon. If the lock keeper does not have a full lock load of boats, he is under instruction to delay for up to half an hour. If the lock closing time approaches and a queue of boats still exists, the lock waiting lay bys will be available for overnight moorings. However do not use water, pump out or sanitation points for overnight mooring under any circumstances.

You should at least **double** the time you plan to pass along the river. Allow at least seven days to navigate between Brentford and Beale Park and maybe longer. and at least two nights between Duke's Cut and Beale Park and more if you are coming down in mid to late August. Play safe and plan to take longer. The Thames is very beautiful and there are plenty of good spots to stop and enjoy.

EA moorings are limited to 24 hours. The 24 hour limitation will be very strictly enforced by patrols. The EA will be offering every inch they can find for extra mooring but to be considerate towards your fellow boaters; please be prepared to allow other boats to moor alongside or be prepared to moor alongside others. Please obtain the leaflet on this subject from any lock keeper and read it well and practise the etiquette. There are bound to be anti-social and obnoxious boaters who will make any excuse to avoid this consideration and reporting their lack of cooperation will never go amiss. Remember a narrowboat is best able to moor onto another narrowboat. Cruisers are not a comfortable fit inside a narrowboat but can cope well offside. Be aware that the owners of the land where charges are usually levied for over night mooring will be unlikely to reduce their price – frankly be prepared for the opposite.

If water conditions appear to change quickly then make contact with the navigation authority for advice. The EA will be staunching weirs to limit leakage. The benefit of this is that low flows means, for you, lower fuel consumption.

Some of you may think that rushing between locks will allow you to make/catch up an extra lock. The EA will be using modern and sophisticated methods of establishing boat speed and anyone caught speeding, which can severely damage river banks; destabilise shore furniture and moored boats, will have the book thrown at them. Fines imposed by local magistrate courts are commonly four

figures with costs on top and the local press reporters are happy to pass on to offenders' home local rags, the details of speeding boats and their owners, publicising this anti-social behaviour. 8Km/h is not fast. Resist any temptation to speed; just take it easy.

Plan to take a leisurely trip along the Thames.

Be prepared to wait at each lock.

Assume you can't travel after 7.00pm.

Do not speed.

Keep flexibility in all your cruising plans.

Double up at moorings wherever possible.

Listen to the EA staff, they really do know much more than you.

Beware the know-all who advises a different course of action.

Remember resident Thames boats to not need insurance so any knock is almost certain to damage your no claim bonus.

Clearly display your Thames registration/licence

Finally, if there is a period of intense rain, even for a couple of days, this will have no profound effect on the drought problem which is primarily due to very low ground water level. However such rainfall will have a significant impact on river conditions. Water levels can rise and fall rapidly - even in a matter of hours. The EA will have staff on the river to advise moored boats on what precautions to take. Lock staff will disseminate advice. Those who are concerned may telephone the numbers below. Do not hesitate to seek advice if you are concerned. If you have the web available on board, check each day on the relevant EA page.

Cruising the Thames is one of the most delightful experiences to be had on a boat. By being patient and taking advice, a trip this summer can easily be the best yet.

Contacts:-

Stuart Taylor, Lower Thames Manager

Waterway office, Lock Island, Ferry Lane, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 9LW

Tel: 01276 454900

Gail Bradstock, Middle Thames Manager

Waterway Office, Kings Meadow House, Kings Meadow Road, Reading RG1 8DQ

Tel: 0118 953 5533

Mark Rowe, Upper Thames Manager

Waterway Office, Red Kite House, Howbery Park, Crowmarsh, Gifford,

Wallingford OX10 8BD

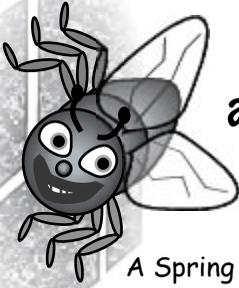
Tel: 01491 828459

Web: www.environment-agency.co.uk

Email: visitthames@environment-agency.co.uk

Louis Jankel

FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

A Spring 'Hi' to you all from my wall watching a meeting full of nuggets of information that you may see elsewhere in the Newsletter but here is a Fly's Eye View !

Do you sometimes feel there's too long a gap between essential facilities on the canals or rivers? Yes folks, a long needed 'gap analysis' will be undertaken by BW in conjunction with other organisations, so it's not just BW's own facilities they're looking at. Are there reasons you don't use certain facilities? Can difficulty of access put you off or perhaps the cost? Let one of the Council know! ...Also - should anglers have toilet and rubbish facilities on the popular fishing lengths?

Do you boat on rivers? There was sympathy in Council for the navigation section of the Environment Agency which has been told by DEFRA to raise its income with a sizeable increase from their private boaters. This will of course apply to visiting boats too. Would you fans of the Thames for example, be prepared to pay to keep the things you like - like the lock keepers and the lock houses (so not to be sold off

or made into pubs). Would boat communities be priced off the water, with the inevitable knock-on impact to the local land communities?

Perhaps EA needs more boats and marinas to bring in more money rather than drive them away with increased prices. What can be done in the short-term to help? NABO will in the first instance publicise the effect the increases could have and find out what boaters think they would do.

Back to the Thames, hosting the National this year with no shortage of boats but an expected shortage of water. Obviously your friendly lockkeeper will organise as many boats as possible into each locking, but wouldn't it help to make mooring duration 48 hours instead of 24 in some places so boats can stop longer and save using water?

Talking of mooring duration, which your Council did, on the Grand Union this time - it seems that many moorings will be reduced to 24 or 48 hours. NABO will remind BW of the decision to have a mixture of mooring durations.

Now to the K&A. BW are considering DAILY charges. Your Council strongly opposes charges for the first 24 or 48 hours. Overstay charging seems acceptable to most people as it helps to stop continuous cruisers not cruising continuously. BUT, a thought: if it's OK to stay if you pay, is stopping longer a privilege for the wealthy?

Several of your local reps told of boaters who have received big 'overstay' bills but no warning that they'd gone into the 'red'. A notice should surely be standard practice. So now you've moored, you may be thinking of having a drink, i.e. alcohol, but apparently there is 'concern' about drinking and driving (again). It seems most accidents, and incidents, happen after the booze. It's a good idea for the steerer not to be beyond the pale but who would police it? Probably you boaters reporting any dodgy driving, especially if you're rammed! Should BW issue advice? Should hire companies?

While on safety matters, Council heard more details of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's ruling that all boat skippers must have a master's licence if the boats are used for any work at all! Even vintage working boats and flats used by canal societies.

The Council also heard about 'heel testing' - nothing to do with stilettos, more about how far a trip boat can lean over before becoming dangerous. Many narrowboats would fail the proposed test if everyone went to the same side at the same time, assuming they weren't as light as me! One operator conducted his own test - his boat went to 25° but did not overturn... OK, he needed passengers on the roof to do it and then they fell off, but that stabilizes the boat! How soon before these petty rules trickle

down through the hire companies to your goodselves?

So to Cut Crime. BW have incident report forms but what about other waterways? Council thought it a good idea if the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) which covers ALL waters, including BW, carried out central monitoring.

Good news floated up to me that the Basingstoke Canal might become a Trust, which should help with the funding as the public can contribute too. The canal is open again and the water levels are up, which bodes well for the Campaign Rally at the end of May Bank Holiday.

Don't forget to look on the Waterway Report website before setting off and do feed in via web or text any problems YOU find. Remember your reports do get back to the appropriate navigational bodies.

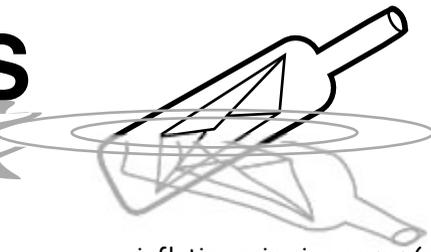
So to NABO's latest publication. It comes as a result of so many questions from people thinking of buying a boat. It'll be a booklet on what to think about before taking the plunge. It won't be ready for the Crick Rally but a leaflet of the main points should be!

Council are happy hear that old colleagues Sue Burchett and Celia Kennedy have popped up again smiling, so hello to them...

and byeeeee
from



LETTERS



Rafting Out

The Thames "moor alongside" campaign is very welcome. I remember the stunned appreciation of the owners of a steel "Pedro" cruiser when we invited them to breast up with us on a public mooring. We all shared a pleasant evening talking boats, and they left us in the morning with the gift of a bottle of wine! Regrettably, the last National on the Thames revealed a large number of narrowboaters who needed educating, so lets hope this initiative helps.

Kevin Hood, NB Kara Sea II

Members' support...

I've just read the letters page in NABO News, particularly the comment by Dave Mayall. It is my personal opinion that the man is talking rubbish (I was going to put it a lot stronger but then I thought that ladies might read this :-)). When NABO was first formed it was very anti-BW but, generally, with good cause. Since that time (possibly due to NABO's influence) they have become much better and NABO has, quite rightly, become less confrontational. I think that NABO (and you) have got it just about right - well done and more power to your elbow!!!

John Weller

..more...

Like Dave Mayall I too am a complete fan of BWB.

Over the years I have seen BWB introduce lots of stupid rules, burdensome regulation and above-

inflation price increases (and more) all justified with much double speak and weasel words.

Naturally I accept all of this uncritically and feel we should all chastise Stuart Sampson for only half-heartedly bringing their activities to our attention with such a campaigning spirit, eloquence and style.

So thank you BW for giving Stuart such volumes of ammunition with which he so ably has honed his journalistic skills and made us face reality.

If Dave Mayall wants to vacate NABO on this one issue, as he suggests, I will cover his membership with a donation of £15

Simon Greer, NB Arabia.

...even from Number One

I'm trying to find more time to spend boating but since I left my employment of 22 years I seem to be busier than ever!

Anyway, keep up the good work - seems to me that you and the Council are doing a first class job. All that work and still there are whingers who don't appreciate how much dedication it takes. I may not be active on the political front these days but do appreciate all that you guys and gals are doing.

Dave Green (the original NABO Chairman, membership number 1)

Thanks

These and other appreciative comments are very welcome and are what makes all the work worthwhile. - Stuart

NABBO

I found Daeve Hook's note insisting that NABO is to be pronounced "Nabbo" a bit curious.

Though Wikipedia is not necessarily the definitive word, it can at least serve as a point of departure -- and perhaps a counterweight to the strictures Daeve Hook presented in the April 2006 NABO News. For what it's worth, Wikipedia indicates that the pronunciation of acronyms is as follows (emphasis in bold added):

- Acronyms and initialisms are abbreviations, such as NATO, laser, radar, sonar or scuba, written as the initial letter or letters of words, and **pronounced on the basis of this abbreviated written form.**

Phonetically, that would suggest "Naybo" is the preferred approach. That is consistent with the way in which we all pronounce NATO as "Nayto," rather than "Natto." Were we to adopt Daeve Hook's notion, I can only wonder what

we'd have to do with AA, either as "Automobile Association" or as "Alcoholics Anonymous," which would have to be pronounced differently.

I look forward to the next instalment on this point -- and ultimately capitulation by the "Nabbo" contingent....

Harvey Schorr
nb Spuyten Duyvel

Moorers beware!

BW proposes to change its system of charging at their Moorhen Marina (R.Stort) from £94 per metre to £2,751 per berth (figures from BW Waterscape).

The owners of small boats, who probably are less well off, will suffer most. The charge for a small boat, say 6m, will rise from £564 to £2,751 - about x5.

A boat would have to be over 29m (96ft), beyond the gauge of the waterway, to break even.

Ron Bingham

NABO CRUISE 2007

Carole is in the early stages of planning next year's cruise - to the River Medway, in June or July as it is a long way and maximum daylight hours are needed. It is not normal practice to have a pilot for the Thames estuary, and even if she could find one, it would be very expensive due to the distance involved. Therefore, if you think you might be interested in this cruise, (easier than the River Severn as the Thames navigational channel is clearly marked with buoys for the whole of its length) then you should consider renewing with a suitable insurance company.

St Margaret's will cover you with no extra surcharge as long as you comply with all regulations and inform them of date of travel in advance.

Saga will similarly cover you without a pilot as long as you travel in a convoy.

This information is being given to you in advance of your renewal date.
n.b. you may wish to put a GPS on your Christmas or birthday wish list!

COUNTER POINTS

Views from the
tiller 'dahn sarf'
by Canaldrifter

Surrey County Council has now officially gone into reverse over their proposed cuts to the Basingstoke Canal's funding for this year. They will produce their whole £150,000 share after all. However, the situation will be reviewed again before next year. This action is due to the great number of *'measured, constructive and carefully thought out'* protests they have received, they say..... including ours.

Now that BW has returned to its previous position on shared ownership boats' licence fees, due to another *'measured, constructive and carefully thought out'* campaign by NABO and others, I wonder how much money and effort went into getting to white paper stage before it was aborted. Still, future pre-consultation discussions and early user involvement in policy setting should avoid waste in future. How do you recycle white papers? Cut them into squares and hang 'em high in the loo?

It now costs inland waterway commercial operators annually £200 plus VAT to belong to APCO/BMF. For £15, they can belong to NABO. We are thinking of the folks who our chairman dubs 'the new Number Ones'; all those essential small businesses afloat, such as day-hire boats, hotel boats, coal and gas boats, fender-makers and canal artists who might struggle to find such high

membership fees. NABO is ideally placed to inform them of what the navigational bodies, the BSS, and the MCA are up to. Boating safely, at reasonable cost to all, is our 'number one' interest.

The official average 'human bean' has grown from 64 kg to 75 kg, it seems. This is affecting heel testing of passenger boats (how far they lean over if everyone clambers to one side.) Whilst this can be dangerous for cruisers, at present the MCA reckon that even narrowboats should only heel to no more than seven degrees. I reckon twenty-five degrees would be safe. Has anyone ever heard of a narrowboat turning over as a result of passenger movement?

Another *'measured, constructive and carefully thought out'* protest at high level by the BMF, APCO, BW and NABO combined is making the MCA think again. This is just the sort of issue that could spread to affect private boat owners if not kept in balance.... or are we leaning too far?

Ad:

"Special offer: visit the Thames in 2006, and save yourself 14.1% of 2007 prices".

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