

**INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS**

**NABO**



**NEWS**



**Issue 3 – May 2007**

**ANOTHER EXTENDED ISSUE: (It's all happening)  
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# EDITORIAL

I had quite a shock two days ago. Dreamcatcher is now on the Kennet & Avon, having been to Godalming on the Wey and Lechlade (see article on page xx). The next target is Bristol. My youngest brother was working the locks while I steered.



In County Lock, Reading, I decided to help him by closing the upper gate. The boat was not secured. 'That's OK, 'cos I can close the gate before the boat drifts,' I thought. Stupid mistake number one. Of course, I was wrong. Although the gap from the lock gate walk-way to the counter was just a couple of feet, 'I can step across that.' I decided. Stupid mistake number two.

My feet don't always go where I plan to put them nowadays. I half missed. It was enough to slip. I found myself dangling with arms outstretched from the tiller arm, up to my waist in cold K&A, without the strength to hoist myself aboard. Younger brother was already opening sluices. Luckily he heard my third yell. Even so, I am big bloke, and by now, half saturated I weighed even more. He couldn't lift me. My grip was failing. Luckily a young man who was sunbathing nearby saw our plight, leapt aboard and was able to hoist me out of the water by my belt. I think he may have been an immigrant. He certainly didn't know what the Magnums bottle contained that we gave him in thanks. So lessons learned. Stepping across any kind of watery gap is now not an option for me with my gammy legs. Stepping off an unsecured boat is also not a good idea unless a rope is in hand. And cruising the K&A with less than two able-bodied crew members is not to be recommended. It is hard work, even for a fully fit crew. I'm supposed to be Nabo Safety Rep too! Pity a camcorder was not to hand. We could have used the video to demonstrate what NOT to do in locks.

This month's NABO NEWS is as action packed as usual. Apart from some pithy correspondence from the folks who matter.... you, it also contains reaction from No 10 regarding the online petition to 'Save Our Waterways'. Don't be too optimistic. We also have a statement from someone who should know better, trying to shift the blame for underfunding from DEFRA to BW. I really believe that this government thinks we are all fools. They must do, if they reckon we will believe even half the spin coming out of Westminster. Oh for some plain speaking truth! Please find enclosed your new NABO window sticker. Happy boating.



Tony



**'SAVE OUR WATERWAYS'  
ON-LINE PETITION:  
THE PM'S OFFICE ANSWERS**

We received a petition asking:

10 DOWNING STREET

"We the undersigned  
petition the Prime Minister to



introduce legislation to solve the short term funding problems that have been caused by the cuts that Defra has made, and threatens to continue, to the budgets of British Waterways and the navigations the Environment Agency, and to ensure that long-term funding is made available to enable the inland navigation authorities to maintain, improve and restore these important parts of our national heritage."

**Details of petition:**

"Our inland waterways are a unique national asset that provide an important contribution to the quality of life for millions of our citizens. According to British Waterways, there were 300 million individual visits to the canals in 2005 and we are deeply concerned that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has seen fit to reduce British Waterways' grant by some £60 million over the next 5 years and that of the Environment Agency by over £20 million in this financial year. We believe that these cuts will have a devastating effect upon the well-being of inland waterways and put at risk many urban regeneration projects.

Over the past ten years British Waterways has been enormously successful in the management of its waterways and the Government is committed to ensuring it is able to continue to do so. In just the past seven years, British Waterways has facilitated the restoration of more than 200 miles of canals and waterways and reduced its maintenance backlog under this £180 million programme. This has only been possible because of substantial government investment by Government in England, Wales and Scotland of £524 million since 2000. British Waterways is a good example of where the Government's increased investment should be viewed against performance over the last 10 years and not just on the basis of a short term adjustment.

Ten years ago, the total revenue figure, on a like-for-like basis, was £98.7 million; this year, it is £189.4 million. Over the past six years in England and Wales British Waterways has received £452 million, and its waterways in Scotland have received some £72 million from the Scottish Executive giving a total Government spend on £524 million. This includes £42 million between 1999 and 2004 - which helped British Waterways clear its £90 million backlog of safety arrears. It did this eight months ahead of target.

Last year, British Waterways earned just short of £100m in trading income, the highest it has ever earned and making up over half of its total income of £190m - its fourth best year ever in terms of overall revenue. The rest of its income comes from Government grant and third party contributions.

British Waterways agrees that in the long term, it needs to become more self-sufficient, so that it can reduce its reliance on money from central Government. In light of this, the restructuring of British Waterways was already in progress before the budget realignments were announced. It is for the Board of British Waterways to decide how best to apportion its reduced budget in relation to its activities and I very much welcome the way it is taking positive action to actively manage its own funding situation and put itself on a firm footing to ensure the sustainability of its canals for the future.

Over the course of last summer and autumn, Ministers reviewed Defra's budgets. The Chief Executives and Chairman of British Waterways, along with others in the Defra family of sponsored bodies, were invited to contribute to this process.

British Waterways' grant for 2007/08 remains at just over £55m. It has also received £2.048m for the repayment of the principal on a National Loans Fund loan, bringing its total budget for 2007/08 to £57.545m. In arriving at this figure, Ministers have sought to provide an affordable level of cover, avoiding the need to make a cash cut to funding, given that other budgets within core Defra have been cut.

I am pleased that we have been able to safeguard this level of funding, given spending constraints. British Waterways needs greater certainty of funding if it is to be able to plan sensibly and run its business. This is why we notified it of its funding for 2007/08 before Christmas in order to help it manage the consequences and any risks associated with this level of funding. It is now the Government's intention to provide British Waterways with greater security of funding, through a three-year funding agreement, from 2008/09.

### **Editor's Comment:**

Who are you kidding, Tony? We're not daft! If Defra hadn't made such a mess of its finances over a computer system that didn't work (installed against advice), the bird flu epidemic that wasn't, and farmers' grants not paid on time resulting in a heavy European 'fine', then BW and the EA would not have had to suffer such sudden huge cuts.

You make no mention of Defra's mistakes, though the Defra committee did. Have you read their report? You also make no mention of the Environment Agency, who's plight over maintaining its navigations is possibly worse than BW's.

Look, it is plainly obvious for all to see that whatever you say there is not enough money in the kitty to sustain the waterways in the future. You are effectively asset stripping. Get them away from Defra into the hands of a department who knows and cares what heritage mean. What have our waterways to do with commercial fishing, food and farming?



**RECENT PRESS RELEASE**  
**from EFRAcom about rural payment agency:-**

(Please note the lack of spin, for a change!)

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has called for the former Secretary of State Margaret Beckett and senior officials in Defra to be called to account for the fiasco over the implementation of a new Single Payment Scheme for farmers. The Select Committee's report into The Rural Payments Agency and the implementation of the Single Payment Scheme calls the handling of the introduction of the new EU Single Payment Scheme (SPS) for farmers a "catastrophe" and a "serious and embarrassing failure for Defra and the RPA". Committee Chairman the Rt Hon Michael Jack MP said:

"This report is as much about failed policy implementation as it is about a lack of accountability. The reason that we are calling for people to consider their positions is because of Defra's failure to carry out one of its principal core functions. Whatever one's view about the CAP, Defra has a duty to ensure that farmers receive the payments to which they are entitled. In this case Defra failed to do this on time and on budget.

"The report confirms that responsibility and accountability stretches from the top of Defra all the way to the Rural Payments Agency, but so far only one man has paid for this failure by losing his job: the former RPA Chief Executive Johnston McNeill. We believe if accountability is to mean anything then the position of others must now be seriously questioned. Those involved should examine their consciences about the role they played in this failed venture which could well cost Defra and farmers up to half a billion pounds."

In its report, the Committee questions why some of those in the Defra and RPA leaderships most closely involved, in particular the former Secretary of State Margaret Beckett, the former Permanent Secretary Sir Brian Bender and the Director General for Sustainable Farming, Food and Fisheries, Andy Lebrecht, have moved on unscathed or stayed in post.

"A culture where ministers and senior officials can preside over failure of this magnitude and not be held personally accountable creates a serious risk of further failures in public service delivery," the report concludes.

"Accountability should mean that good results are rewarded but a failure as serious as this of a Department to deliver one of its fundamental functions should result in the removal from post of those to whom the faulty policy design and implementation can be attributed".

The Committee says it should be the case that when a Department fails to deliver a key programme right at the heart of its fundamental responsibilities the holder of the office of Secretary of State should not be rewarded with promotion but its reverse. The Committee wants new guidance to make clear to ministers what they should do to take responsibility in the event of serious departmental failure, and recommends that the Cabinet Secretary reappraise the work of past and present members of Defra's senior management team to determine whether they should remain in post.

# WELLAND WATER TAXI SCHEME AWARDED



An Environment Agency-backed initiative that allows people with disabilities the chance to enjoy the fun of boating has been awarded second place in the Waterways Renaissance Awards 2007.

The Spalding Water Taxi, which operates on the River Welland and Coronation Channel in Spalding, Lincolnshire, was nominated in the Partnership category in the prestigious annual honours run jointly by the Waterways Trust and British Urban Regeneration Association. The scheme was picked as a finalist last month, from hundreds of entries across the country.

Judges in the Partnership category of the awards, which aims to recognise a project that exemplifies strong partnership working between the public, private and community sectors, praised the Water Taxi service for the co-operative working arrangements between the



Environment Agency, Broadgate Homes, South Holland District Council and Springfield Outlet Shopping Centre and Festival Gardens.

The Spalding Water Taxi service operates four electric boats, two with disabled access, on the Environment Agency managed River Welland and the Coronation Channel. The boats shuttle between Spalding town centre and the out-of-town shopping complex Springfields Outlet Shopping Centre & Festival Gardens. This project was made possible by the Environment Agency allowing access onto the Coronation Channel, which is not a statutory navigation. In addition, the safe passage of the taxis was only ensured as the Environment Agency invested £30,000 installing a safety boom across the Marsh Road Sluice on the Coronation Channel.

# **WATERWAY ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED**

## **Scarlett Elworthy, Press Officer - Environment Agency writes:**

The Spalding Water Taxi initiative is part of a wider drive to improve disabled access to Environment Agency-managed waterways.

We recently teamed up with the Thames Path National Trail Office to develop 12 new walks along the Royal River with specially designed routes suitable for wheelchair users. These easy Thames Path walks, with wide paths, gentle slopes and rest areas, promise stunning views, wildlife and interesting stops including locks, historic sites and children's play areas. The Penton Hook walk includes a fishing platform with disabled access.

We also worked with the Kent Wildlife Trust and Kent County Council to reinstate disabled access to the top of the sea wall at Oare Marshes Nature Reserve, near Faversham, in Kent. Improvement to the wall meant it was no longer possible for disabled visitors to enjoy the impressive views overlooking the wildlife haven. But after installing £30,000-worth of access ramps in September the wall is, once again, open to all.

Facilities for disabled anglers, from wheelchair-accessible car-parking to fishing platforms, were also installed at a number of sites during 2006, including on the River Aire in West Yorkshire, at lakes near Ivybridge and Bideford in Devon, and on Hemlington Lake in Middlesbrough.

The Recreation & Environmental Enhancements (REEL) Project, in Lincolnshire, that forms part of the Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership and is funded by Lincolnshire County Council, European Regional Development Fund and the Environment Agency, also completed work to improve access to the River Witham, near Lincoln, last year. Eight new wheelchair accessible fishing platforms were installed at Five-Mile Bridge on the south bank of the river and access to the platforms, with a purpose-built path, provided.

Work has also just finished on a fishing platform that will enable people with disabilities to enjoy the angling facilities on offer at Hailsham Country Park Lake in East Sussex. Mark Bennett, Environment Agency Fisheries Officer, said: "This facility is quite unique within the area and will benefit many disabled anglers. The location lends itself perfectly for our angling participation days so we are hoping to take advantage of this to help those who might not otherwise have a chance to try out this great sport."

Meanwhile, the Environment Agency is reminding the three million people who receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in England and Wales that they will be eligible for a half-price fishing licence from 1 April 2007.

The move to extend the disability concession, which currently covers Blue Badge holders with severe mobility problems, to include all recipients of DLA, follows a review by the Environment Agency, the Disability Rights Commission and the British Disabled Anglers Association. This review found there was a greater potential demand for the half price licence beyond the 30,000 that currently claim the concession.



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# Recent questions concerning the price increase of the 4-yearly BSS certificate

## Question

*We had been told the Scheme would become largely self-sufficient by 2011. Why has this been rushed in now? Was it the Defra funding problems?*

## BSS

The joint owners of the Scheme, British Waterways (BW) and the Environment Agency (EA), always intended the BSS to break-even. They made it clear in recent years that the BSS would be moving towards this goal soon. The Defra cuts have accelerated this move. The BSS is no different to any organisation, it needs certainty of funding to be able to plan properly and run efficiently. So the move to 'break-even' removes uncertainty and allows better planning for the delivery of long-term safety goals.

## Question

*Licensing, mooring, fuel, pump-out and other costs are rising above inflation, the BSS rise at £15 inc VAT is too much at 115%.*

## BSS

It is deeply unfortunate that some of the general cost increases are happening together. Some of the concurrence is linked to the reduction of central Government support for running costs of waterways. However, we hope it helps to some extent that the certificate price is frozen for three years.

## Question

*If this is the navigations authorities' scheme to help them keep their navigations safe for all, then why are they not contributing now and why must boat owners cover all the costs?*

## BSS

Generally, a navigation authority will directly charge their customers for its activities. Having the cost of the Scheme spread equitably across all boat owners reduces the hidden costs that BW and EA owners have been paying through their licence fees to subsidise the Scheme for all.

## Question

*If boaters are paying, the navigation authorities have no place in running the Scheme.*

## BSS

The navigation authorities have an obligation to set construction and equipment standards for boats and this is done by means of BSS requirements. The change in the cost of the certificate does not alter the position.

## Question

*The Scheme is very expensive and we cannot see any benefit in its rules or costs.*

## BSS

The zero-based review carried out by the directors at BW looked closely at all of the activities of the BSS and the value for money it provides. The review concluded that the BSS provides good value for money and helps deliver safer waterways, efficiently. The Scheme's approach is to always aim to be as efficient as possible. One indicator of this is that the overall cost of the scheme has changed little over the past three years and will be changing little in the future.

Within the total certificate cost to examiners of £28.20, £4.20 is VAT and the remaining £24 goes to the BSS for the administration and customer support of the BSS certification service,

the standards making and review process, gathering and reviewing incident data, safety research, providing safety advice and information, and quality control of the examination process.

#### QUESTION

*Why are examiners saying that the certificate which costs them £28.20, will cost us £30-50 when they issue it?*

#### BSS

Each examinee must take the appropriate decision for his or her business concerning any 'pass-on' costs or business 'mark-ups', and our advice remains for boat owners to seek two or three alternative quotes from examiners when arranging examinations. It should be recognised that the certificate is not the only cost associated with being an examiner; insurances, training, business costs, transport costs and an annual registration are typical elements and as such in common with many businesses. However, it would be inappropriate for examiner to label any charge as a BSS fee other than the actual cost incurred by the examiner.

#### QUESTION

*Can't you do something to soften the blow? For example, why can't boaters self-declare their craft and cut the expense of the certificate and examination?*

#### BSS

The certificate price is now frozen for three years which we hope will lessen the overall impact of the increase. We are also trying to help immediately with some of the costs for the examiner. For example the minimum number certificates he or she can order has been reduced from five to one. We will also be cutting in the next registration year some of the paperwork burdens and in the medium term, the business plan is to improve and automate the way we collect examination and risk data. This will both cut-out administration tasks for examiners and it will improve the way we review safety data. The concept of self-certification is a

non-starter. This just would not address the risks that the BSS was set up to reduce.

Whilst boat owners are obligated to selfcheck their boats in between examination to ensure their craft continue to meet the BSS requirements, BSS examiners are still finding that 67% of boats have faults. Over 170 boats last year had faults so serious, they were an immediate hazard.

Self-certification was in effect in operation before 1997 and it simply did not work then and indeed was one of the main reasons why examiners were introduced.

Concerning other measures that may 'soften the blow', the Scheme, through the BSS Advisory Committee, is always open to strong ideas that might help, provided that all impacts take account of financial and safety risks. The worst result would be a more expensive certificate and safety standards compromised.

#### QUESTION

*Why didn't you consult with boaters on this matter?*

#### BSS

Both BW and the EA were aware of the views of the BSS Advisory Committee members which include boat owners organisations,

Graham Watts

General Manager BSS

# The two year NABO Vice Chairman's Retirement Windlass, Walking Sticks, and Warfarin Ten Point Cruise in aid of Save Our Waterways.

It is probably the most hair-brained, stupid idea that your editor has come up with yet. At last my 56ft narrowboat Dreamcatcher has escaped the Basingstoke Canal, where it has been trapped by circumstance for six years. Four of those years were in my capacity as boatmaster running trip boats at the canal visitor centre Mytchett. The other two were due to navigation closures. Lack of proper funding from the waterway's owner, Surrey County Council, is taking its toll on the poor state of the infrastructure, and low rainfall figures did the rest.

However, just a few days after the last bank slip had been shifted out of the way, Dreamcatcher was worked down the 28 locks by my two younger brothers and a friend, until at last we could hang a right on to the River Wey. In my new roll as a disabled pensioner, I did most of the steering. The siblings did most of the work. The friend cooked wonderful breakfasts, and his dog Drum fell in..... twice. Well, to be fair to Drum, that isn't quite correct. He fell off a lock wing wall on to the side of the boat, gave everyone a heart-stopping moment as he disappeared, only to reappear climbing off the boat's gunwale on to the banking. He didn't even get his paws wet..... that time. On the other occasion he simply walked off an upper wing wall straight into the cut. This time he got very wet. Drum is not a natural boaty dog, unlike the editor's little lurcher, Sophie, who hates water, so is ideal.

Even though I had done it before, I had trouble not getting all emotional as Dreamcatcher explored a different watery scenery at last. Second to the Upper Basingstoke, The Wey is a very beautiful river. Three days, and several pubs later I was able to navigate Dreamcatcher up the last two locks solo. It was bloomin' hard work! The old legs aren't what they used to be, and walking around the locks to open sluices and gates has become a real chore. But, being a stubborn old git, I eventually did it. It was with great satisfaction that I spun the boat at Godalming Wharf, and moored up just above the water point, being very careful not to block it in any way. As Vice Chairman of NABO I have to be squeaky clean. The editor of narrowboatworld insists. A few weeks earlier the chairman's boat had been spotted moored half way across a water point somewhere north of Watford Gap, and it had been reported!



Then the mad idea came to me.

Godalming is the southernmost navigable point on the entire inland waterways system. Wouldn't it be fun, if at all possible, to take Dreamcatcher from here to the northernmost? But where is that? Tewitfield, where the M6 shamefully culverts the Lancaster Canal near Kendal Services, has to be a contender. But what about Ripon in Yorks? Is that further north? To make sure, I thought perhaps I had better do both.

However, since helping my good friend Mike Stevens to take his new boat to Lechlade on the Upper Thames last year, i had always harbored an ambition to steer Dreamcatcher on the Isis too. There is something very attractive about all those 170 degree bends. So should it be a three point cruise? Then, it's been years since I boated on the Kennet and Avon. What about Bristol? Actually, what about doing all the extremities of the system? I made up a crazy list.

The cruise has now become the two year NABO Vice Chairman's Retirement Windlass, Walking Stick, and Warfarin Ten Point Cruise in aid of Save Our Waterways. I doubt whether I'll actually get far. It's a case of who gives out first, me or the boat.

Godalming (done), Lechlade (done), Bristol, Llangollen, Tewitfield, Ripon, Boston, (across the Wash?) to King's Lynn, Bedford, and Bishop's Stortford. The Ten Point Cruise was born. And why not make it worthwhile? Why not use the cruise to publicise to folks on the towpath what DEFRA is doing to the waterways with their quite unreasonable financial cuts caused by their own incompetence? Most boaters know. Many of the towpath users have no idea.



So, with a huge '**Save Our Waterways**' banner borrowed from Louis Jankel, tireless Thames campaigner, hung on each side of the boat, and with sponsorship from River Canal Rescue Ltd (RCR), Oxfordshire Narrowboats and NABO, the mad venture begins.

If you want to sponsor me at a pound, or 50p a point visited in Dreamcatcher in aid of SOW, just email me and say so, and I'll put you on the mailing list.

Wherever Dreamcatcher moors I do my best to hand out brochures and engage folks in conversation. It isn't difficult. People point to the large flapping banners that state **SAVE THIS WATERWAY FROM DEFRA CUTS** and asked, 'Wot's Defra Cuts?' (Sigh.... Right, start from the beginning... )





## **WATERWAY REPORTS FORUM:**

**[http://nabo.org.uk/ww\\_reports/scripts/discus.cgi](http://nabo.org.uk/ww_reports/scripts/discus.cgi)**

After considerable prolonged spam attacks publicising online gambling and some very dodgy website addresses, the online NABO Waterway Reports Forum has been protected, updated and cleaned up. This means that entry to the site for all is now quick and easy. No longer is there a need for user names or passwords. Anyone can use it. You don't need to be a NABO member.

Through the winter of 2006/7 all Waterscape Stoppage Notices were transcribed on to the WRF in their correct waterway locations. This made them much easier and logical to find for those cruising a particular area.

The Forum is a delight to use, with maps, and locations made easy through waterway names. Not only is it a fund of useful information for boaters, but it is also a very quick way for them to report problems they might come across.

All new entries are automatically copied to regional offices. Thus, if something goes wrong, the office knows about it within hours, not days. With current reduced funding and recent leakages, such fast responses may become vital. Even if a boater cannot get online s/he can text a message to **07892 715489** (please note change of number). As soon as possible that message will be transferred to the Forum.

Usually such entries are dealt with very quickly by most regional offices, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Forum.

Everyone who makes an entry should give as much locational information as possible. Bridge or Lock numbers, names, and the nearest village (e.g. '5 miles NW of Chugville') are very useful to those not so familiar with a particular region.

If updated regularly, the Forum is extremely useful to both boaters and to waterway staff, and with your help and cooperation it can become a major contribution towards saving our waterways in these troubled financial times.

For further information please contact either the webmaster:  
Stuart Sampson: [web.07@nabo.org.uk](mailto:web.07@nabo.org.uk) or myself: [safety.07@nabo.org.uk](mailto:safety.07@nabo.org.uk)

**[http://nabo.org.uk/ww\\_reports/scripts/discus.cgi](http://nabo.org.uk/ww_reports/scripts/discus.cgi)**



**BRIEF MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING**  
**of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS,**

held at The Waggon &Horses, Oldbury, on **SATURDAY 21st APRIL 2007**

**Present:** Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair (SS)

Stephen Peters (SP) Andy Colyer (AC)

Tony Haynes (TH) Simon Robbins (SR)

Howard Anguish (HA) Carole Sampson (CS)

Apologies for Absence: Peter Foster (damaged foot), Aileen Butler (on holiday),  
Geoffrey Rogerson (medical appointment).

**ACTION REPORTS**

NABO Stickers have been ordered. For 3,000, the cost is £685 + vat, for 5,000 £952.90 + vat. Carriage £15. It was decided to order 5000, having them delivered directly to Ruth (NABO News packer).

A donation has been sent to SOW, and a receipt received.

CS spoke about the 'workshop' meeting re Standedge Tunnel. It appears that the goal posts have moved regarding the acceptable levels of diesel emissions, which could have serious implications for all longer tunnels, Harecastle and Dudley being specifically mentioned. Tunnels are classed as confined spaces. BW will be carrying out its regular tunnel inspections this year, the first being Standedge, which will also include a review of operating procedures. The discussion highlighted the fact that no measurement of emissions has been carried out since prior to the tunnel being reopened. CS suggested escorted passages as at present on two days a week, with the option of self-propulsion on a third day. She was not convinced by BW's commitment to maximising use of Standedge, as there seemed to be greater concern about not rocking the boat for the other tunnels.

SR commented that Swiss road tunnels would have to close!

CS informed Council that she has been approached to be included in a South Pennine Ring pressure group, and wondered what Council thinks about yet another group. SR thought she should get on with it!

**BW REGULATOR AND CONSULTATION**

SS wondered whether NABO should revive its campaign for an independent regulator / scrutineer for British Waterways. e.g. Offcut.

BW has its Openness & Accountability system, comprising:

- the complaints procedure
- the Ombudsman
- local consultation
- the national consultative council, which has been replaced by BWAf

SS feels that BWAf does not fulfil its purpose. NABO has given BWAf a chance to work, but SS thinks the time has come to resume the regulator campaign.

SR had suggested that the Audit Commission be the best body to oversee BW in his submission to the EFRA Committee, because it already has processes in existence, and does this kind of work with other bodies.

CS asked how much clout the Audit Commission has.

SR replied that in a worst case scenario, it can put people on the BW Board, and actually supervise BW's workings.

SR proposed that we should press for independent scrutiny of BW. This was thought to be a good idea, the actual wording of a proposal to be left to SR.

SP felt that, once formulated, it should form the basis of a press release.

SR recommended that Councillors look through the EFRA transcripts to see what questions the committee is asking: searching questions.

SP thanked SR for his deposition and hard work on preparation for his submission to EFRA. All agreed with this.

It was decided that nothing could be achieved until after the EFRA Committee reports. SS felt that the best option would be for BW to be moved to DCLG, supervised by the Audit Commission.

### **LICENSING, MOORINGS, CONDITIONS & CHARGING**

BW is to set up another, different, working group to give user input for the sealed tender method of bidding for a mooring during the mooring auctions trial. SS has been invited to attend, but told that no debate as to the merits of the scheme will be allowed. SR informed Council that the original working group had told BW that it needs to develop the idea further before a trial starts.

SS felt that the idea has been adopted because BW cannot manage a waiting list system. He informed Council that the trial will be an internet auction, commencing in May, for 300 transactions, the typical number of vacancies over a six-month period. There are to be two trials: an on-line auction, and a sealed tender. He says that BW is aware of the general opposition to the scheme, and that different options as to how the trial will be conducted are needed. BW is against the sealed tender system as it will be expensive.

SR observed that this opinion shows how little BW understands the method!

CS asked what happens afterwards?

SR replied that BW hasn't thought about that, but it could mean a hike in mooring prices.

CS thought that would lead to more continuous moorers.

SR stated that the whole principle is flawed. He would not be prepared to attend a meeting to discuss the operation of a flawed principle.

TH felt that strong PR is needed.

CS thought that this should be issued prior to the BW meeting.

Actions:

- SS to refuse to go, stating why SS
- SS to contact other invitees saying the same SS
- SR to prepare a press release, by rejigging his draft letter to Tony Hales, this also to be included in NABO News SR

Current mooring prices can be found on Waterscape

SS wondered if, in the future, BW would give up operating moorings

SR felt that BW could well do so.

### **2008 LICENCE INCREASES**

These have been set at 10% + the cost index (OXERA)

The same increase for 2009 and 2010.

BW is proposing a consultation exercise about this.

### **SCORE CRITERIA FOR HISTORIC BOATS**

Criteria to establish what is an historic boat are being discussed with HNBOC. If minimum criteria are met, then the vessel will qualify for a 10% discount.

BW proposes to set up an appeals panel.

### **SAFETY**

#### **BSS**

TH reported on a meeting held in Reading. There is concern that NABO might lose its credibility if it pursues a case for self-accreditation, but TH felt that some hadn't understood that this would only be supplemental to initial certification by a competent person. Trevor Rogers feels that, as boaters are going to be the funders of the scheme, we should have greater representation on the committees. The idea of spacing the inspections more widely apart was discussed, but it was felt that this would increase costs as BSS would still require the same income. TH feels that greater flexibility is needed, including financially. TH added that there is no evidence that boats are safer now after introduction of BSS.

## **INLAND WATERWAYS SAFETY EXECUTIVE**

Having had no response to his initial approaches to other organisations about this, the idea has been mentioned again.

## **ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

What to do with troublesome swimmers in locks etc.

- summon BW
- summon the community police team
- report the incident to the police, and get a crime number
- put the information on the Waterways Reports Board

## **CRICK RALLY**

TH offered to provide transport for the stand items if no-one else volunteered, but he would need help with the lifting.

AC undertook to provide pictures via CD with which to decorate the boards. AC

## **NABO NEWS**

SP commented that there was an improvement in the style and layout in the latest issue. TH asked what he should include and what to exclude.

SS thought that he would have enough material from this meeting.

## **DEFRA / EFRA / SOW**

SS had attended a SOW strategy meeting. The Constituency Petition idea is being pushed, to keep the waterways funding issue in front of Parliament. These to be effected between Easter and the summer recess.

David Blagrove had reported to that meeting that in Stoke Bruerne, there are over 100 jobs within the village, but in a nearby same-sized village, there are only 6. The only difference being the presence of a canal.

TH informed Council that he is undertaking a two-year cruise in aid of SOW. RCR is sponsoring him: would NABO be interested in doing the same?

TH would need two small banners. SS to organise these with Richard Carpenter.,

## **BOATMANSHIP COURSES**

TH has spoken to several people who are enthusiastic and want to proceed.

SR asked what has been done to find out what take-up there would be for the courses.

TH explained that the courses are already running, and, as there is current dissatisfaction with the RYA courses, there should be takers for our courses. We would have leaflets to hand out at rallies.

## **A. O. B.**

AC will be attending two festivals at which he will promote NABO. He asked for promotional literature - he can find these at the store.

AC has been in contact with someone who works for the Waterways Trust, who is seeking funding for a recycling project on the Kennet & Avon. He will find out more details and report back.

HA has been contacted by an ex SIBUG member who had received NABO News but nothing to inform him that he is now a member of NABO. HA has contacted Melanie, who had prioritised the NABO News labels, but will be sending out welcome letters in the near future.

The meeting closed at 3.10pm.

## **EDITOR'S NOTE**

As Fly has buzzed off on holiday, I felt that members might be interested in a more formal copy of what goes on in a NABO Council Meeting. Certain more sensitive items have been left out of this report, but as you can see, council meetings are far from being just a jolly. Council does try to have its fingers on the button when it comes to knowing and reacting to what is going on waterway wise.

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



I write this having had an opportunity to remind myself of what I do it all for – a few days cruise up to Tixall Wide. There was even a chance to be nice to some Canaltimers, do a bit of mindless boat cleaning, plus a session or two with saw and axe, processing the bounty BW had kindly left beside the T&M Canal (as a result of NABO's suggestion?). It had at least staved off the duties and worries of being NABO chairman for a bit.

## **NFA?**

Looking at boats, as you do when you get the chance to cruise, you usually expect to see the 'wharf of origin' below the name. Not good practice nowadays, I am told, particularly for hire boats, as some enterprising thieves will slip aboard, steal the car keys, go off to the boat's base and click around in the car park to see if any car responds.

It certainly wouldn't work for one boat we saw, all they displayed were the letters **NFA**.

Surely nothing to do with angling or fishing, I thought.

Could it be a variant on *n/a* – not applicable? Perhaps – *Not F'ing Applicable?*

(That may be too close to the truth for comfort – I knew the owner was a continuous cruiser and when we were preparing NABO's guide '*So You Are Thinking of Buying a Boat...*', I was increasingly aware of how few of society's privileges are applicable to someone living afloat)

In fact I am sure that is exactly what **NFA** was about – **No Fixed Abode**.

Which brings me on to my worry about a possible growth in the number of boats with No Fixed Abode. There will still be the law-abiding continuous cruisers, the people who have realised a dream to sever ties with land and roam the system. However, as BW cuts back its 'non-essential staff', there is bound to be less vigilance to reduce abuse by others. As licence and mooring fees rise, especially the latter if they are hiked up by the highest bidder, and official canalside moorings are curtailed, even more people will be tying up against the towpath on an unauthorised long-term basis. When diesel prices rise in November next year there will be even less incentive for them to untie and give up their favoured spot.

I fear that this may be another nail in the coffin of the waterways if boaters are forced to pay even more. The towpaths will become increasingly cluttered with boats whose owners can't afford to license them, let alone use them, let alone clean them, let alone paint them, and you will hear more casual visitors to the towpath repelled by thoughts of how their inhabitants cope with sanitation and personal hygiene.

Unfortunately there are no 'sail-in' scrapyards as far as I know, and if craning out costs are beyond the value of the boat, what will happen to it? More expense for BW, more unsightly boats, less attractive waterways, less visitors, less third party investment, downward spiral – and that isn't taking into account the maintenance problems I mentioned last time.

We must therefore keep campaigning on all fronts. It is all too easy to cast off and forget all our cares, as I have recently been reminded.

**But. . .**

### **Are we all being taken for a ride in Lady Penelope's big pink limo?**



(For those thinking I've totally lost it, *BW Monthly* highlighted the resemblance of Robin Evans to the *Thunderbirds* chauffeur, Parker)

I am certainly beginning to wonder. Even the EFRA Select Committee seems to have had difficulty finding out just how much "You called, m'lady?" has been going on between BW and DEFRA's senior civil servants. Not enough according to the Waterways Minister when he gave oral evidence to the Sub-committee – he openly accused BW of being less than transparent with the figures, saying he had been chasing them for something meaningful for months and only got them one working day beforehand.

Isn't this just the BW we know and love to hate?

... or is this 'Supermarionation' with strings being pulled from very high places? Now that David Miliband is aiming for the top, somehow he has got to find a way to be above his department's inadequacies, so Barry Gardiner is put in the firing line. He too has to curry favour in case he is pushed off the escalator, so, has he struck a deal with BW to shoulder the blame? In return for what?

In truth there has been a big re-evaluation of the money and the time it will take to bring the network up to the standard BW

needs to maintain it from then on in a 'steady state'. Previously forecast for 2012, this is unlikely to be achieved before 2016, if ever, unless more money is

forthcoming.

"Now you tell me. Well, let's see about what we can do." But didn't the headlines of 180 job losses now and a 50% craft licence increase over the next 3 years tell him? If they didn't the reaction to them must have done. A man of supposedly above average intelligence like Mr Gardiner surely knew there was more to this than a storm in a tea cup whipped up by some 'middle class' boaters and a handful (in DEFRA terms) of employees whose jobs were 'on the line anyway'. If he could have proven that BW wilfully manipulated the trades unions and customers to further its own ends, he might have got away with it, but now he has well briefed MPs, many in his own party, to appease. There may still have to be a lamb sacrificed at Watford on the altar of Gardiner's political career and I feel they are still living in fear, but I am beginning to feel DEFRA can't now escape having to give BW more money. How it does this without looking like a climb down will no doubt be the subject of some more political dressage.

### **What about boaters?**

I think BW will have to admit after the campaign that waterways without boaters are about as much use as woollen lock gates. Canals and boats go together like tracks and trains, and, as far as maintaining the whole 'delight' that BW hopes to offer its millions of visitors, BW needs boaters in a partnership.

I have speculated in the past about the value of the 'Boaters' Property Portfolio' and I now have figures that show that there are approximately 1.13 million feet of boats on BW waters. At a build price of £1,000 per foot, the original investment by their owners is therefore £1.13 billion, well over the figures quoted for BW's property portfolio. Even with boat depreciation the values of the

**BW needs boaters in a partnership**

'portfolios' are comparable. However this isn't the view you always get as a boater. BW's consultation with us as equal 'partners' has left a lot to be desired of late. Advice from the Moorings Focus Group against auction trials seems to have been dismissed, and the agenda for the April Boating Issues Meeting was delayed till just three days in advance because the External Relations Manager was 'unable to communicate' with the Communications and Marketing Director. We still have a plethora of queries awaiting answers.

Is this a measure of how much importance BW gives to meeting the senior representatives of a group that also has hundreds of millions of pounds invested in the waterways?

...and what are boaters doing? Turning out in force to make the public, and its elected representatives, aware of BW's plight, amid a hail of price hikes and 'hard cheese, it's market forces' arguments. We are told, 'Blame DEFRA', and we do. However in the corridors of Whitehall they take heed of Robin Evans saying that we are 'middle class boaters', to blame for all the hassle, and therefore they concur we are all ripe for some more juicing.

Thank goodness for the Select Committee turning stones. I think this is the best thing that could have happened for the waterways and a lot of it is down to your campaigning. All submissions, evidence and conclusions will be published, we just have to point people to the right bits.

### **A Waterways Scrutineer?**

There was a time I had hoped that the British Waterway Advisory Forum might provide the sort of independent scrutiny BW is getting now, but even Robin Evans admits being disappointed at the lack of challenge. He knows now he has almost carte blanche from the users to do what he wants, such is the lack of focus of the Forum. So, who is he answerable to? There's the BW Board, which seems

far better equipped for property speculation than caring for the waterways, and DEFRA – and what respect is there left for DEFRA? What can be done? Should there be a call for more boaters on the Board? Should NABO revitalise its campaign for a permanent Independent Waterways Regulator, or at least a scrutineer who can take a detached view of BW policy? Should the Audit Commission be involved? Now is not the time to be apathetic, even though the draw of carefree days afloat beckons. Let us know what you think, and even better, what you are prepared to do.

*Stuart*







## **Recent Press Release from the National Association of Boat Owners**

The National Association of Boat Owners (NABO) has written to BW's Chairman, Tony Hales, opposing BW's intention to offer up to three hundred directly managed mooring vacancies to the highest bidder.

Council Member, Simon Robbins, who represents NABO on Moorings Matters, said:

"Council has resolved to pursue a complaint in public because we feel private representations we have made over several months, and more recent public representations, in both cases through the formal consultative structures, have been ignored.

We requested an urgent discussion with the Director leading this project three weeks ago, when it became clear BW intended pressing ahead with a live auction trial in spite of advice to the contrary from customer representatives. As BW have gone three weeks without responding, we are not prepared to wait any longer and feel we must make our concerns public, not least to our members.

We do not believe it is appropriate that a scarce operational resource such as long-term publicly owned moorings should be denied to those on the current waiting lists and instead be allocated to the highest bidder, even on a 'trial' basis', and certainly, not before full public consultation has been undertaken. The auction approach implies a number of changes to several existing national policies. We therefore believe BW's wish to allocate any moorings by this method should be subject to full public consultation.

Council has also resolved not to engage in any discussions about the implementation of an auction process, an action that might be interpreted as offering NABO's approval for what BW are doing.

We are considering a number of issues around the legality of this proposal, in terms of consultation policy and are also concerned about sale of goods and fair trading issues. It seems unclear what in detail boaters are going to be bidding for. People who bid for moorings will also apparently be allowed to fix their fees for three years and so potentially BW will have customers at any given site paying different rates, on slightly different terms and conditions to their neighbours, for an otherwise identical service.

**If, in spite of our representations, the trial goes ahead, we urge boaters to observe the "buyer beware" axiom and take professional advice before parting with any money."**



**Dave Green**  
**One of the founders and a genuine number one!**

### **THE EARLY DAYS AS REMEMBERED BY NO.1**

I have been a boat owner for a long time. My first boat was bought when I was 15 (next year I get my bus pass!) and was an eight foot fibre glass dinghy powered by a British Anzani outboard (later upgraded to the Rolls Royce of outboards, a British Seagull!) The boat was based at Tonbridge on the River Medway and was used for many trips on the river including, with some portage, to Peshurst, well above the official head of navigation. Over the years, I owned a wide

variety of craft including small wooden and plastic cruisers until eventually seeing the light and buying my first narrowboat. This was a 43 foot ex-hire Springer from College Cruisers at Oxford and was the first of my boats to be called Willy No-Name. The current, and probably last, is a 62 foot boat build in 1994 by Norton Canes Boatbuilders and fitted out by Stephen Goldsbrough Boats. Currently, it is being fitted with a Russell Newbery DM2 engine.

In the late eighties though I was becoming more and more convinced

that there was a need for an organisation that effectively represented the needs of inland boat owners. I was goaded into action by a letter which appeared in the waterways press expressing similar views and written by Syd Beacroft. Shortly before this was published, IWA had held what it called its "Great Debate" as to the role which it should adopt for the future. The membership decided, probably rightly, that IWA should campaign for waterways and for all waterways users, not just boat owners. But for me and others, a separate organisation exclusively dedicated to the needs of inland boat owners was sorely needed. I heard on the towpath grapevine that an attempt had already been made to form such an association. The two organisers were Jon Darlington and Phil Bland. They had about 30 members in their organisation at the time although I think it is fair to say that further development was needed.

Syd and I met with Jon and Phil in the sunshine at the Goldsbrough yard at Knowle. The outcome of that meeting was the pooling of resources

and the formation of NABO. I was to be the first Chairman, Jon was Vice-Chairman and Syd was Treasurer. Publicity for our fledgling organisation was sought through the waterways magazines.

David Stephenson, the then President of IWA, requested a meeting to discuss whether there was a way that we could achieve what we wanted from within IWA. The meeting was useful but could not overcome the basic fact that IWA was committed to representing a wider constituency than boat owners and whilst we believed that an organisation was needed that was devoted exclusively to the needs of inland boat owners. Relations with IWA, then and in the future, were good and it was always my position that boat owners should, if their consciences and finances permitted, support both organisations since our present waterways network would not exist had it not been for the work of IWA. To get our association off the ground, we arranged a public meeting at a pub in Dudley during the weekend of the IWA National Waterways Festival. If memory serves, we signed up about a hundred new members at that meeting. Thus was your own association formed.

Views expressed here may or may not comply with the opinions of NABO Council . So, just to be on the safe side, assume they don't , even though they might.

# LETTERS



*Dear Tony,*

*As with many fellow NABO members, I am also a member of IWA: it was therefore with a mixture of anger and sadness that I read the dangerously divisive final comments in 'Fly On The Wall' in the April edition of NABO News. I was at that fateful 'National' at Windmill End in '91 that saw the formation of NABO; I felt then that there was a need for both organisations, and I still feel that today.*

*A fly is an interesting insect with a remarkable ability to sense what is going on around it, but 'our fly' seems to have lost that ability. In the present political climate all factions of the waterway movement need to show more than a degree of solidarity - because so much of what we all love is at risk. Politicians are only interested in numbers, and - on the national scale of petitioning for deserving causes - waterway stakeholders constitute an almost insignificant number. The collection of a mere 37,000 signatures - in more than 4 months of campaigning! - is frankly an embarrassment of which we should all be ashamed: and in a way it is also confirmation that over the last 10-15 years both IWA and NABO have failed to 'grow' their membership numbers in line with the burgeoning popularity of our inland waterways. We, in NABO in particular, must also face up to the fact that we created only a very small proportion of the above total: to do otherwise is a potentially dangerous delusion. Boat owners alone do not even show as the faintest dot on most politicians' radar screens - and BW's visitor figures confirm our numerical insignificance if nothing else. All this affirms that, at this time above all, we must all stick together.*

*Will Chapman, and his team who organised such a brilliant SOW campaign last November, soon realised that to maximise its effect the ongoing campaign had to be broadened - to emphasise the wide-spread, 'community' benefits of waterways. This is something that IWA realised years ago when it first adopted the slogan 'Waterways for All'. Flies, like all insects, have a relatively short lifespan and therefore develop little knowledge of history, and sense of perspective - they can also carry disease. IWA's present resurrection of its slogan is both wise and timely. Its adoption by boat owners is the surest way to win friends (numbers again) and influence people - not least in Westminster.*

*I joined NABO because I am a boat-owner, and I want NABO to campaign on boating issues on my behalf: but what is the use of a boat without a worthwhile waterway to boat on? Boats and waterways complement each other, NABO and IWA must do the same. My final piece of evidence of our fly's poor optical sensing ability is demonstrated by the fact that, before it wrote its April contribution, it failed to read or perhaps understand - the fourth paragraph of our Chairman's February column, and in particular the sentence in which he said 'We must take the battle to the towpaths.' In the battles of the first world-war the German General Ludendorff described the British soldiers as 'Lions led*

*by donkeys' - I hope that ninety years on, in our on-going battles with Government, we don't become waterrats led by a fly.*

*Ian Fletcher.*

Thank you Ian for your forthright comments. I understand your wish to defend IWA, but I don't quite understand your belittling of NABO's influence as a campaigning body. I do know why NABO was originally formed, and its track record since speaks for itself. As Fly has buzzed off on holiday I can't ask it to respond, so I will leave further comment on your thought provoking letter to the next issue, before getting out the swatter.

Tony

*Dear Tony,*

*With regard to David Mayall's piece on boat licensing in the last Nabo News, he claims that in an ideal world if everyone paid their licence fee we would all pay less for our licence. But we don't live in an ideal world. How many don't pay car tax? How many don't pay income tax? How many people don't work and rely on our taxes for income? Solve this and we would all save more than a boat licence fee. He reports that only 45 % of boats, on a particular stretch of canal, were licensed. He doesn't know this, only BW and the boat owners know the true position. The three boats whose licences ran out a month ago could well be either awaiting their licence or waiting to collect their post.*

Dear Tony,

With regard to David Mayall's piece on boat licensing in the last Nabo News, he claims that in an ideal world if everyone paid their licence fee we would all pay less for our licence. But we don't live in an ideal world. How many don't pay car tax? How many don't pay income tax? How many people don't work and rely on our taxes for income? Solve this and we would all save more than a boat licence fee.

He reports that only 45 % of boats, on a particular stretch of canal, were licensed. He doesn't know this, only BW and the boat owners know the true position. The three boats whose licences ran out a month ago could well be either awaiting their licence or waiting to collect their post.

I have been in the position of not having a valid licence on our boat. I was looking after a sick daughter 140 miles away from our boat and so the valid licence stayed 140 miles away.

If a boater is paying monthly they are not issued with a licence. The 45% of boaters licensed is a figure of his. It may bear no relation to the true figures. BW are checking all boats every November so they know the figures and they are dealing with defaulters.

There are marinas and boat clubs with agreements that don't require boats to be licensed, these are historic rights. BW have asked us not to report unlicensed boats as they know the non payers and it just makes a lot of extra work.

If you want a zero tolerance policy be prepared to pay much more for your licence. Checking boats costs money and if they already have a licence, wasted money; taking boaters to court takes money; removing abandoned boats takes money. I am not condoning unlicensed boats I am just saying be careful what you wish for. It could cost us more than the status quo.

Sue Burchett



Dear Tony,

I read with much interest the article entitled "Boats on Fire", since I and my family could easily have found ourselves in a disastrous situation a few months ago.

In my recently acquired boat, newly certified to BSS standards and in excellent running order, I have an inverter - my first experience of this useful bit of equipment. My son and daughter in law and my two little grandsons visited the boat over the Christmas holiday and, as they arrived after dark, we spent their first night aboard on my Marina mooring, with a 240 volt hook-up. Now that I have an inverter - Victron 1500 watt, so a quality product - I am able to enjoy the benefits of a standard 240 volt domestic video recorder at any time and we all watched a favourite film before retiring to bed. The next morning, while I sorted things out generally on the roof, my son disconnected the hook-up and fired up the engine ready to go off on a cold and windy New Year's Eve cruise. The TV and video were on stand-by from the previous evening. (Sorry - we are not fully into "green" energy conservation yet!) Just after the engine had started up I fortunately went below to find an extra sweater and immediately smelled something electrical overheating. With some alarm I traced the smell to the video player, the innards of which were actually smoking. I disconnected it straight away and took it up on deck, ready to dump it in the cut if it started actually to burn. It didn't - but it might well have done and if no-one had happened to go below we could have suffered a disastrous fire.

Of course, I binned the video machine in the first available skip, but have learned a valuable lesson. If you have an inverter, switch off at the plugs, or preferably actually disconnect, all 240 volt appliances before firing up the engine. Presumably some sudden power surge caused the video player to overheat. It could equally well have been the TV or any other 240 volt appliance that was not actually isolated.

I am not alarmist, and don't go about predicting disaster, but it is often the unexpected that gets you in the end, isn't it? I am and have always been obsessively careful about the solid fuel stove of course, and the gas.....etc. etc.....

Happy boating,

Ann Berry - N/B MYOSOTIS

(ex. NABO Council Member for a short time some five years ago)

What a near miss, Ann! Thanks for the warning. I must admit the problem seems to have been one with your video player rather than a 240v power surge on starting. I'm sure the experts will be along in the next issue to make comment, but I never leave anything electrical turned on in my boat if I am not actually using it, to conserve battery power if nothing else. I always assume that if it can go wrong, one day it will! Tony

## Barry Gardiner slates BW

On the 23th of April, Barry Gardiner spoke alone on behalf of DEFRA to give oral evidence to the EFRA Sub-Committee on BW funding, in which he slated BW for lack of transparency. Two days later he had to explain himself to sixteen MPs when Michael Fabricant, Conservative MP for Lichfield, secured the third adjournment debate on BW funding. In order of speaking, the MPs were:-

Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire) (LD)  
Dr. Andrew Murrison (Westbury) (Con):  
Mr. Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD)  
Andrew Stunell (Hazel Grove) (LD)  
Mr. James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)  
Mr. Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con)  
Ian Stewart (Eccles) (Lab)  
Dr. Richard Taylor (Wyre Forest) (Ind)  
Sir Peter Soulsby (Leicester, South) (Lab)  
Charlotte Atkins (Staffordshire, Moorlands) (Lab)  
Mr. James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)  
Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South) (Lab)  
Lorely Burt (Solihull) (LD)  
Bill Wiggin (Leominster) (Con)  
Sir Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield) (Con)



First, Barry Gardiner was made well aware of the problems faced by BW and the relevance to the members' constituencies. He began his reply with a dig at the Tories record on waterway investment, but as he was facing members from all parties questioning his reluctance to promise a long term funding solution, he replied: "*... People demonstrated because they care about the future of the waterways. My hon. Friend [Sir Peter Soulsby MP] focused us, saying that the concern is about people's confidence in the future of the waterways. That is precisely why I was not prepared to sign up to a long-term settlement with BW, as I was urged to do, until I could see clearly the way in which such a settlement would bring the network to a gradual, timetabled conclusion in steady state.*"

He then went on to criticise BW: "*I recognise that my evidence to the Sub-Committee came as a surprise to many hon. Members, who now seek further information. I do not intend to prejudge the Sub-Committee's findings, but I am happy to set out my position more clearly....I was surprised and not a little annoyed that, despite repeated requests, I did not receive the full information until last Friday evening in the form of a letter from the chairman and a spreadsheet setting out BW's projections in 2002 against its actuals to date and its business plan for 2007-08 and 2010-11. The information includes grant and commercial income, and both documents have been made available to the Sub-Committee. The table showed that by 31 March, Government grant in aid to BW was £8.8 million more than the projection in BW's 2002 plan. It also showed that despite BW's assumptions—some might say, pessimistic assumptions—about future grant levels starting next year, which it calculated on the basis of RPI minus 5 per cent. to show a £48 million loss of grant by 2012, commercial income over the same period was due to rise by some £78 million more than it forecast. That leaves a net increase in BW's projected total available income by 2012 of £30.1 million—that is, £30.1 million more than it projected in its original plan. Despite that, BW no longer believes that steady state for the network*

*can be achieved by 2012 and has revised its maintenance assumptions."*

He then talked in more detail about BW's asset maintenance and classification, during which there were requests that he 'give way'.

*"...A number of assumptions were made, not all of which have been borne out. They have meant that in BW's view the 2012 target cannot now be achieved. It gave me no joy to receive that letter, although it clearly and unequivocally set out the information that I had requested for so long. However, the letter clarified that BW had underestimated the true cost of the maintenance and upkeep of the waterways in its original projections.*

*"The fact that BW's assumptions were wrong, however, is not the issue for me. We are talking about a highly technical, 200-year-old network and it is understandable that assumptions about the costs of maintenance can change over time. What caused me concern was that I had waited for the information for as long as I had. It should have been made available earlier, both to me and to stakeholders.*

*"... Now that we have more transparency over the true cost of the upkeep, I am confident that BW and I can work together to agree a way forward that will manage the waterways in a sustainable manner, which will include gaining greater selfsufficiency."*

Barry Gardiner has promised the EFRA Sub-Committee a 'paper trail' to substantiate the lack of communication. We look forward to seeing what the Sub Committee make of it in their report.

*I am tempted to say, "Please note the spin... but it is obvious." Tony*

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Kingfisher KD26 engine for sale. This traditional style two cylinder engine is in full running order and is being removed from a 62 foot narrowboat to make room for a Russell Newbery (being bought with the wife's retirement lump sum!!). The Kingfisher has done sterling service including on tidal waters. Less than 5000 running hours. Includes an excellent Kingfisher hydraulic gearbox and an alternator rated at 100amps. £650. Phone Dave on 077952 11166 or e-mail: dave.w.green@btinternet.com

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*"6 EA employees went on a 'life jacket' course. When they jumped in the swimming pool 5 jackets failed."  
(From our sub-aqua reporter)*

# Boating & Corridor Issues Meeting

3 April 2007 BW Offices Hatton

These are from BW's 'Action Notes' with NABO's representative's comments in *italics*. *We have yet to receive full notes.*

## 1. Licences

### a) Increasing Licence Costs

A round table discussion on proposed licence fee increases from April 2008 will be a part of October's Boating & Corridor issues meeting. BW will issue a consultation paper for wider individual and group views to be submitted on the proposals during summer 2007.

*It all sounded a fait accompli tome so I can only assume the October discussion will be explanatory.*

### b) Historic Boat Licence Discounts

HnBOC (*Historic Narrowboats Owners Club*) representatives (with other experts as necessary) will form an appeals panel to advise BW on challenges to rejections of applications for the discount to be given.

***If there are members who are not satisfied with this arrangement and want a NABO presence, please contact me.***

### c) Boat Safety Scheme

- It was agreed that the views of the group were to be passed to the BSS office for formal response. These were: suggestions for the extension of the certificate period (five or six years' duration rather than the current four year period); and the value of the BritishMarine Federation or another body to taking responsibility for the Scheme.

*See article elsewhere in this issue*

## 2. Moorings Policies

### a) Online Moorings reduction (as new off line moorings are created)

- IWA to circulate a copy of their revised policy to BW and other interested parties once completed.
- BW to provide a breakdown of BW-directly managed online moorings according to whether they have no services, limited services or full services.
- BW to consider extending the currently proposed notice period of 12 months to one of greater duration where moorings are to be closed.

*BW intends to reduce its online moorings by one for every ten created offline. There was some confusion between 'online' and 'towpath-side'. Hopefully the first to go will be towpath side especially where there is a need for transit moorings, e.g. next to lock flights or other navigational 'impediments'. The meeting made a number of suggestions to make the draft letter of notice more amenable.*

### b) BW directly managed moorings – trial period of 'Moorings Auctions'

- RBOA's response to BW initial written proposals to be circulated to all attendees
  - Volunteers required for taking part in an e-mail group discussion of draft wording for the web based auction site
  - BW to consider whether a written sealed tender process can run in parallel with the proposed web-based auction trial and report back
- RBOA's response echoed the opposition of NABO and other boaters. Since this meeting, Council has resolved that NABO doesn't take part in talks about method while the principle is in question. BW seem determined to continue,*

*saying it has the right to price its mooring space how it chooses without consultation and that private providers are not obliged to consult. The IWA would only condone it if the sealed tender option be explored.*

### **3. Waterway Structures**

#### **a) Lock Winding Gear**

- Latest report on post K&A gearing trials to be made publicly available
- BW to consider amending 'BW Aware' stickers to show a date when the sticker was applied on lock gearing and other structures
- The new version of BW's Safety Standards (including the 'Minimum Safety Standards' as described by Vincent Moran) to be made available on the BW website and circulated to the group members once complete
- BW to produce a paper detailing recent changes to lock gearing (eg Rochdale, K&A and installation of safety pawls) and assessment of safety improvements versus user operation

**b) Stiff Lock Gates** – standards under development, report back at next meeting

#### **c) Removal of Pinch Points**

- BW to report on progress in identifying these and publicising them, along with confirmation of intention to remove pinch points during planned maintenance works.

#### **d) Conversion of manned structures to user operation**

- Attendees to suggest those structures that they believe could be user operated and those they believe should not be user operated. To be discussed at the next meeting.

*Note - concern about longer traffic hold-ups if bridges were manned by 'amateurs'. Safety and responsibility for other vessels an issue with bigger locks. Members views please*

### **4. Waterways Maintenance**

**a) Dredging plans/policies** – review of concerns. • BW to provide a follow up to Jim Stirling's recent meeting with users. Arrangements for dredging of the River Soar to be communicated to Beryl McDowall

#### **b) Veg Pledge/invasive plants**

- Beryl McDowall to be provided with guidance from HQ on what policy is being passed down to local teams, (specifically regarding Floating Pennywort and Japanese Knotweed to the River Soar)

*No reflection in these notes of BW's admission of not meeting general 'Veg Pledge'*

### **5. Services & Facilities**

#### **a) BW service prepayment cards**

- BW to circulate statement regarding its confirmed intentions for completing this project

*BW stressed that it made no profit on pump-outs and had only reduced price under pressure from a 'small extremely vocal minority'!*

### **6. Waterways Management**

#### **a) Heritage – local remits**

- Proposed BWAf sub group meeting to be convened to discuss management of the heritage estate
- Latest 'State of our Waterways Heritage' Report to be circulated

- Details of the process for ensuring heritage policy adherence to be circulated
- Tony Harvey to provide details on plans for Tipton Gauging Station
- BW to circulate policy guidance determining decision making process for disposal or alteration of heritage structures

**b) Olympics** – effect on navigation of Lea Valley waterways

- BW to consider suggestion that Dockland areas can be made available to visiting boaters during the 2012 Games

*BW stressed that no boats will be allowed on navigable waters close to the Games for security reasons.*

**8. Anti-Social behaviour**

- BW to report on various initiatives under way, including circulating its 'National Swimming Guidance' once complete

*Results from NABO Northwest complaint about boater's responsibility when faced with 'dare jumping' kids in Wigan Locks. Response: Report to police and get a crime number. Do not take any risks. Put report on Waterways Reports Forum*

**9. Any Other Business**

a) Regional & National communications for User Group Meetings

- External Relations to take the lead in ensuring published standards are maintained and actively communicate the Operating Instruction (June 2004) internally

*NABO local reps please take note*

Stuart Sampson



## THE REGIONAL SECRETARIES' PAGE PROFILE OF LOUIS JANKEL, THAMES REP.

Your editor thinks profiles of the people whose names you read will aid you! After a number of whiskeys, below Fawley Island on the River Thames one sunny afternoon, he prevailed!

My name is Louis Jankel, member of the clan that includes a Blockhead; film director; car designer; shoe manufacturer and the real parents of Paddington Bear - my cousin Aunt Lucy also boats upon the Wey. I am one of the less talented members of the extended family.

I am 65. Retired 10 years ago from management consultancy; it was getting in the way of boating. Brought up in West London. Early days, from the late 1940s, I plied the passenger boats between Hampton Court and Greenwich; rowed at school on the Tideway in the 1950s and after that I was on the water in borrowed or hired boats.

One day there was a lady in my life whose exquisite and very long legs were literally within my lascivious grasp. She had a yearning for boat trips with her two springer spaniels so it seemed obvious at the time that I should buy a narrowboat. This was a lifechanging event – the legs entertained for a time but it is the boat that is still around. She was being offered for sale at Pyrford Marina by the owner Bob Johnson. Any one lucky enough to come under the



wing of Bob will recall what a truly kind and generous man he was. Madam has no pedigree, she is a mongrel having been the only product of a couple of boat fabricators, made redundant and paid off with a quantity of steel. She is built like a brick and save for Mick Sivewright refuses to take any direction when going in reverse.

She is 14m and blue; called Madam after my nephews Mark and Adam – not the legs. I have cruised her from Godalming to Ripon and Llangollen to Cambridge. As I will do almost anything to avoid excessive locking, I have no intention of visiting the Huddersfield to compliment Marsh, the lowest point on the inland waterways. Madam winters in Brentford Marina from November to April otherwise out and about on the waters.

Initially I cruised the Wey and Thames. In the early 90s I ventured to Cavalcade at Little Venice in London. This was my introduction to the canals and I could not understand who would want to swap their cruising grounds for such filthy waterways seemingly inhabited by hooligans who enjoyed throwing, at passing boats, anything to hand including rats (dead) and cats (alive)!

After retiring in 1997, I girdled my loins and decided to try the Oxford Canal. The narrow canals have now become

very fine and familiar friends but frankly the broad lock canals still hold less allure for me. I do not cruise cities save for London once each year for Cavalcade. I single handle the boat because Georgina, my partner of 14 years, is a diminutive volatile Hungarian and for those of you that have heard of her fellow Magyars the Gabor sisters, these ladies are not designed to wind locks, also Georgina is not retiring until next year.

Two years ago, I was persuaded by some employees of the Environment Agency (EA), to apply for a seat on the River Thames Regional Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committee. (RFERAC).

The committee meets four times each year and 'advises' the Environment Agency on all aspects of policy within the committee's remit. At the last April meeting we discussed the EA boat registration charges that ended up at 12% for three years. If you think we did a lousy job you may be right but the EA started the discussions with the RFERACs two years ago looking for 25% for nine years! We did make a small difference. We discuss many aspects of the environment – I am involved in a committee to advise on the proposed water charging settlement for 2009-2013 (PR09) – the Thames Waterways Working Group (WWG) which advises on the navigation policies of the

River Thames – I have an interest in the proposed Abingdon Reservoir which we discuss and discuss and discuss! – The invasive species fascinates me and I am waiting to find out when terrapins are so classified. I must confess I am able to make any significant contribution to all conservation but declare an interest because I do enjoy eating them. I attend all my various committees as a boater and have agreed with NABO that I do not represent them. The RFERAC membership is for an initial two years, which will have expired by the time you read this article. I have been assured I shall be re-appointed. I abhor the boater who does not offer consideration to others that the boater expects for himself. Fishermen, ramblers, canoeists etc all have as much right to use the waterways as boaters but we must ALL share the waterways together. Louis Jankel





